

ANIMALS & MEN



THE JOURNAL OF THE CENTRE FOR FORTEAN ZOOLOGY



Russia, 2008: Expedition Report

Plus: Fortean Frogs; The Weird Wildlife of Hampstead Heath; Lake Monster roundup; the CFZ Museum; New Beast of Exmoor exhibit; news, reviews etc..

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CONTENTS:

- 3 Editorial
- 4 Faculty of the CFZ
- 6 Newsfile
- 14 Obituaries
- 17 Mystery cats diary
- 19 Letter from America
- 22 Aquatic monster study group
- 26 Russia 2008: Expedition Report
- 40 Fortean frogs and toads
- 44 Unusual wildlife of Hampstead Heath

- 48 CFZ news
- 50 Weird Weekend 2008
- 52 Letters
- 54 Book reviews
- 57 The sycophant
- 59 Cartoon by Adobe Photoshop

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EDITORIAL



Dear friends,

At Corinna's and my wedding last summer, my brother (who is an Army chaplain and was conducting the ceremony) did the "does anyone here know any good reason" bit, and my heart stopped. I know that half of my friends have a psychopathic sense of humour, and that the other half are mad, and so it would not have entirely surprised me if someone had put their hand up for a joke. When my worst fears were not realised, my brother said "I love it when a plan comes together", which got a big laugh from the congregation.

Well, I, too love it when a plan comes together, because after years of planning, and several years of building, the CFZ Museum is now a reality. There is more about this elsewhere in the magazine, but I am repeating myself here because this is only one of several long-term CFZ projects that have finally reached fruition this year.

Finally all ten CFZ Yearbooks are now available in perfect bound form, as is - after four years of writing - my book *Island of Paradise* which Nicky R has done a fine job of plugging in his column this issue.

Another long term project that has finally happened is the Russian expedition, sponsored kindly by Prof. Bryan Sykes of Oxford Ancestors, and Wolfson College, Oxford, and esteemed author of *The Seven Daughters of Eve* - a remarkable book about tracing the history of European peoples through the wonders of mitochondrial DNA. We had been planning this expedition for years, and it was amusing to find, when I finally retypeset the 1999 Yearbook earlier this year, that it included an essay in which we said that we hoped, one day, to visit Kabardino Balkaria.

Dreams do, indeed, come true on occasion.

Just as we were going to press with this issue, we heard an unsubstantiated rumour that the *enfant terrible* of Stateside cryptozoology, Jon Erik Beckjord has died

aged 69. No-one who knew him will be at all surprised to hear that the original press report has been contradicted by various of Beckjord's acolytes who claim that his cancer is, in fact, in remission and that he is recovering well.

I was surprised at the level of vitriol that reports of his death has produced. I am not gonna get all sanctimonious and talk about not speaking ill of the dead; Beckjord was a complete pain in the neck at times. Indeed, my last communication with him was to tell him to complete a physiologically impossible act of self-procreation when he telephoned me about six months ago to criticise my haircut in my wedding video on CFZtv, but I was actually mildly fond of him. He is probably haranguing St. Peter about the Patterson/Gimlin footage as we speak, preparing to go and make a nuisance of himself bothering the eternal shades of Grover Krantz and Patterson himself.

Whatever anyone says about him he was a character and a half, and the world will be a different, and less colourful place, (although whether a richer or a poorer one is open to debate) without him.

On a more prosaic subject: The CFZ is rapidly becoming more mainstream than ever, and our days of being the last gang in town are sadly largely behind us. Is there anyone within the CFZ membership in the UK who is an accountant, who is prepared to give us some advice, and possibly even do a little voluntary work for us, helping us to get onto the best possible financial footing, in order to carry out our planned programme of research and publication.

Because we have a lot planned for the next few years, we need more support than ever. And as I said above, the men in the Downes family like it when a plan comes together..

Jon Downes

Woolfardisworthy,

North Devon

July 26th 2008

"THE GREAT DAYS OF ZOOLOGY ARE NOT DONE"

THE FACULTY OF THE CENTRE FOR FORTEAN ZOOLOGY



"In her abnormalities, nature reveals her secrets." (Goethe)

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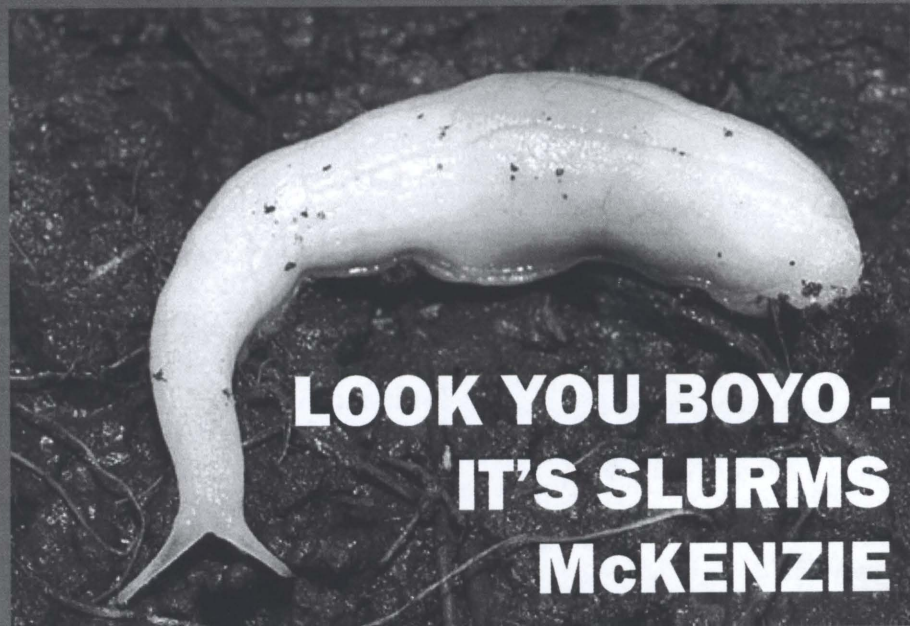
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NEWSFILE

COMPILED AND EDITED BY JONATHAN DOWNES WITH OLL LEWIS



LOOK YOU BOYO - IT'S SLURMS McKENZIE

An unusual slug was discovered in Cardiff, Wales this summer. The slug, which has been nicknamed the ghost slug because of its deathly white pallor, is carnivorous, blind and nothing like any other species of slug found in the area. The slugs spend most of their lives underground hunting earthworms and are thought to have evolved in a cave system.

Scientists working for the national museum of Wales have received sightings of the slugs in the Cardiff area, Caerphilly and Swansea so it is likely the species has been present in the area for many years and may be distributed over a far wider area. The nearest known slugs of the same family as the Cardiff ghost slugs are found in Turkey, where they are much more common and it has been postulated that the ghost slugs may have evolved from out of place Turkish slugs that made their way to Cardiff in

plant pots.

Ben Rowson of the National Museum of Wales is currently undertaking a slug census to find out just how large the slugs range is. To find out more and download an identification sheet visit the National Museum of Wales website:
<http://www.museumwales.ac.uk>

EVERY BREATH YOU (don't) TAKE

Scientists have discovered the first known lung-less frog. The frog, *Barbourula kalimantanensis*, comes from Borneo and was first documented in 1978. However at the time scientists did not

NEW & REDISCOVERED



bother dissecting it as the frog looked unremarkable. The frog lives in fast flowing streams where respiration using lungs can prove to be a selective disadvantage, as the creatures would easily get caught by the current. The frogs are able to survive without lungs because of their low metabolic rate and the high oxygen content of the stream's fast flowing cold water. The loss of lungs is thought to have evolved on only three occasions leading to several lung-less salamanders, but only one species of lung-less caecilian (*Atretochoana eiselti*) and now one lung-less frog. Further scientific study of the species has been hampered by the animal's rarity.

GREAT GECKO

Indian scientists have discovered the largest ever gecko to be found in the country. It was first photographed in the ghats of Pune's Junnar Taluka by herpetologist Ashok Captain two years ago, who sent his photos to Varad Giri of the Bombay Natural History Society in the hope of identification. The gecko, which has been named *Hemidactylus Aaronbaueri*, is India's largest measuring 25cm (10 inches), 2cm larger than the next- longest gecko.

OBSCURED BY CLOUDS

Illustrated by H. L. W. A. 1877



CARPOMYS MELANURUS
S. CARPOMYS MELANURUS

A species of cloud rat, thought to be extinct, has been rediscovered in the Philippines. The rat was only seen once before in 1896 when a British researcher was handed several specimens by local people. A joint American and Filipino research team rediscovered the species, *Carpomys melanurus*, in April in the Central Cordillera mountains. The cloud rats were found 5 metres high in an old tree that formed part of the forest's



(BELOW LEFT) This 19th Century image of *Carpomys melanurus* was the only known. Until now (ABOVE)

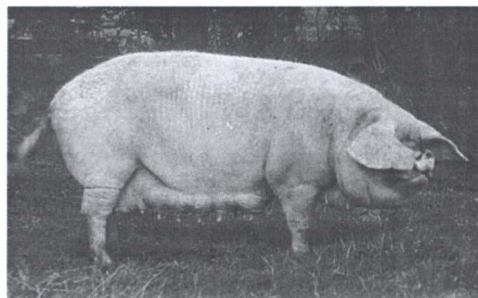
canopy on wide branches festooned with orchids and moss. Danile Balete, the co-leader of the project, said of the find:

"We had suspected from its broad, hand-like hind feet that it lived up in big trees, but this is the first evidence to confirm that."

The cloud rats have dense, soft reddish-brown fur, a black mask around large dark eyes, small rounded ears, a broad and blunt snout, a long tail covered with dark hair and weigh around 180 grams when fully grown.

PIGS ON THE WING

An extinct breed of pig has been revived thanks to genetic mapping. The Cumberland pig died out 50 years ago, because after the Second World War farmers gradually switched to using foreign



breeds of pig that matured faster producing greater yields faster and cheaper than many traditional British breeds like the Cumberland.

Pig breeder Terry Bowes used DNA mapping performed on a piece of preserved hide from a Cumberland pig and selective breeding from other traditional breeds like the Tamworth and the Kune Kune and has managed to breed a pig with a 99.6% genetic match to the old Cumberland breed. The rare breeds survival trust has refused to recognise the pig as a true Cumberland.

FISH AND CHIAPAS

A new species, and indeed an entirely new family, of catfish has been found in the Lacantún River of southern Chiapas state in Mexico. The fish, *Lacantunia enigmatica*, is the only known representative of Lacantuniidae, the third new taxonomic family of fish found in the last 60 years. Anatomical studies of the fish showed a number of differences in the structure of the fish's skull and its barbells when compared to other families and species of catfish found in the same area. The area where the fish was found is part of a jungle reserve,

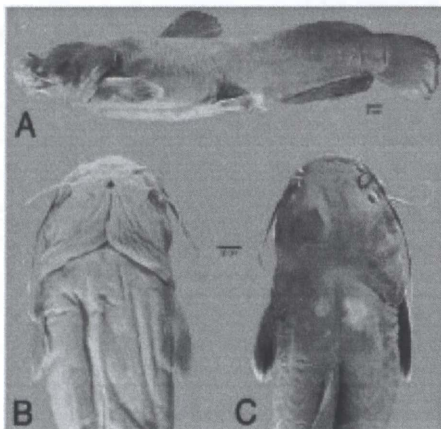


FIGURE 1. *Lacantunia enigmatica*. Holotype specimen ECO-SC 3859, 427 mm SL. A. Lateral view. B. Ventral view. C. Dorsal view.

but the river runs through areas threatened by loggers and cattle farmers, whose actions could affect the fish down-stream.

DOLPHIN'S SMILE

It was discovered recently that the Bolivian dolphin is a different species from the Amazon River dolphin. The Bolivian dolphin, *Inia boliviensis*, has more teeth than the Amazon River dolphin, *Inia geoffrensis*, and is smaller and a lighter grey in colour.

At a conference to announce the discovery and planned future dolphin conservation, Fernando Trujillo, who is regarded as one of the world's top dolphin ecologists said:



"River dolphins are amongst the most endangered of all whale and dolphin species. The pressures on them are immense, as was highlighted by the recent news of the extinction of the baiji in Asia. Urgent action is needed if we are to prevent Amazon River dolphins from suffering the same fate."

WELCOME TO MADAGASCAR

A previously unidentified species of mouse lemur was officially recognised as a new species in July. MacArthur's mouse lemur, *Microcebus macarthurii*, is a small nocturnal lemur that is only found in a small area within the Makira region of Madagascar. A joint German and Malagasy team studying the lemurs in the area noticed that some lemurs appeared to be significantly smaller than the region's previously identified Mittermeier's mouse lemur, *Microcebus mittermeieri*, which was



© Dr. Blanchard Randrianambinina

discovered in 2006 along with Jolly's mouse lemur, *Microcebus jollyae*. The team compared the animal's DNA with all 15 known species of mouse lemur and discovered that they had found a new species.

Dr. Ute Radespiel, who was responsible for the DNA analysis in the University of Veterinary Medicine Hannover, is concerned about threats to the survival of the new species and other species in Madagascar:

"Unfortunately, this exceptional centre of

biodiversity is in real danger. As in many other regions of Madagascar, too, deforestation activities, slash-and-burn cultivation, hunting and mining of mineral resources pose an enormous threat to the remaining forests and their inhabitants. Conservation activities are urgently needed to ensure the long-term survival of these animals"

FREAKY FROGGIES

More details have emerged about the lifestyle of a new species of bird eating frog found in Thailand in 2002. The frog, *Limnonectes megastomias*, has a greatly enlarged head and enlarged 'fangs' within its mouth. The males of this species have exceptionally large mouths and powerful jaws that appear to be out of proportion with the rest of the animal. Unlike many other species of frogs, the males are larger than the females; at least their heads are larger. The body remains about the same

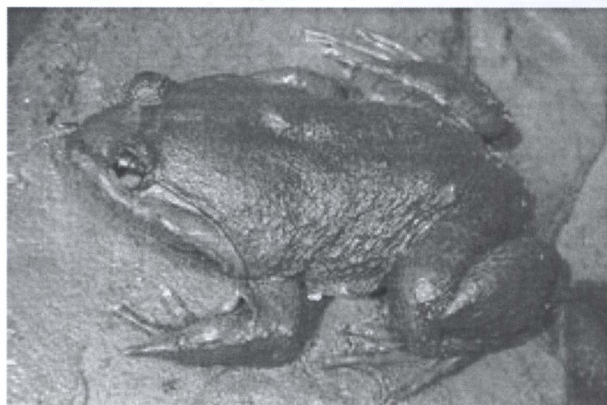
size as in females, but the head continues to grow and gets considerably larger than the females. It certainly gives the appearance that the male is a much larger frog.

The 'fangs' are out growths of bone from the mandible called odontoid processes and it is thought that the males use them when fighting each other for territory and mates. Many of the frogs found by researchers were scarred, and a few were missing limbs as a result of this violent intra-specific competition. The odontoids in males measure around five millimetres, which is large in comparison to the overall size of the animal, and are much smaller in females, measuring only one millimetre.

The frog's diet consists of insects, other frogs and birds. In order to catch birds the frog waits submerged in water at the edge of streams and pounces out on birds as they come to drink.

FAMILY FUN

A new family of gecko has been identified by researchers from the University of Minnesota and Villanova University. Tony Gamble and Aaron Bauer used genetic sequencing to classify geckos rather than the previously used system of classification based on differences in foot morphology. Gamble and Bauer believed that using foot structure to classify geckos was inaccurate and lead to confusion about the evolutionary history of the animals. They hope that their work will enable researchers to better understand the evolution of geckos around the world.



The new family has been named Phyllodactylidae, and consists of 103 species from North and South America, North Africa, the Middle East and the Caribbean.

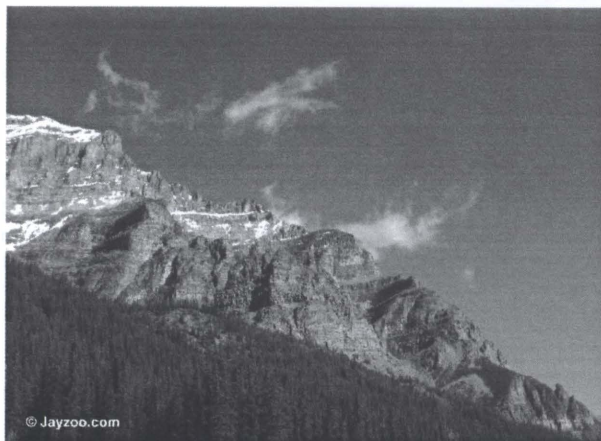
ON TOP OF OLD SMOKEY

Nearly 900 new species have been identified in a 10 year long study of the flora and fauna of Great Smokey Mountains National Park in the United States of America. The study started in 1997 and has involved the work of over 1000 scientists studying all 800 acres of the park to form an inventory of the species.



16,570 different species were identified in the park, 6,129 being recorded in the park for the first time and 890 species completely new to science.

BIRDIE IN A BABBLE-ON



© Jayzoo.com

A bird first seen in China in 2004 was declared a new species in June 2008. The Nonggang babbler was named after the nature reserve it was discovered in close to the Vietnamese border. The babbler is dark brown in colour with a white crescent-shaped patch behind the ear, has a white throat speckled with greyish brown spots and is about the same size as a blackbird, *Turdus merula*.

It is thought that the bird has inhabited

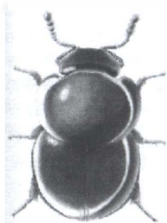
the limestone rainforest of the nature reserve for years but it has never been catalogued before because it has managed to stay well hidden due to its dull colouration and 'skulking habits'. Zhou Fang, of the College of Animal Sciences and Technology, and Jiang Aiwu, one of his graduate students who first spotted the bird in 2004 believe that the babbler may also live outside of the protection of the reserve in the surrounding rainforest.

"Their habitat in the reserve is protected," Zhou says. "But as they could also exist in the Karst rainforest outside the reserve, logging and burning wood to make charcoal pose a threat to their wider habitat."

"Given the bird's small number and its threatened habitat, it's important to include it in the State list of protected species,"

INTRODUCING... THE BEETLES

When faced with the monumental task of giving names to 60 new species of slime mould beetle they had discovered, Quentin Wheeler and Kelly B. Miller sought inspiration from the world of politics. Three of the new beetles were named after prominent members of the Bush administration in America: George W. Bush (*Agathidium bushi*), Dick Cheney (*A. cheneyi*) and Donald Rumsfeld (*A. Rumsfeldi*).



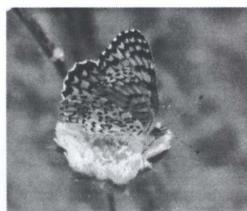
Other famous figures the pair

named slime mould beetles after included; Pocahontas, the conquistador Cortez, the Aztecs and Darth Vader and Wheeler has recently named a whirligig beetle after Roy Orbison (*Orectochilus orbisonorum*).

Another biologist, Prof. Jason Bond, has named a spider, *Myrmekiaphila neilyoungi*, after the singer Neil Young.

A SPECIES ALREADY

The Jerusalem fritillary butterfly has been upgraded from subspecies to a species in its own right. The species was first discovered 100 years ago in 1908 and was classed as a



subspecies. However, recent scientific study has shown that rather than being a subspecies, the butterfly is a distinct species. The new name for the species was chosen by the Israeli Lepidopterists Society and announced by Israel's Environmental Protection Minister as Jerusalem's golden butterfly. The minister reiterated the Environmental Protection's Ministry's commitment to biodiversity conservation: "Israel is located on a crossroads between three continents and is characterised by different climatic zones. It contains some 113 species of butterflies, despite its small size. The fast development and use of land threaten at least a quarter of these species of butterflies."

OBITUARIES



PAT WISNIEWSKI 1954-2008

It is one of my less pleasant duties as editor of this magazine to choose the people who's passing should be marked by an obituary in *Animals & Men*. What makes the job even worse is when - for the fourth time in a year - I have to report on the death of a CFZ member, and for the second time in a year, the death of a personal friend.

Pat was best known as the manager of WWT Martin Mere. Pat began working at the Lancashire reserve in 1983, becoming centre manager in 1991 and became the centre exhibition development manager for WWT in 2006. He was the longest-serving centre manager at Martin Mere to date and was at the forefront of the success of the prestigious tourist facility.

Richard and I first met him in the early summer of 2002 when we were first investigating the sightings of a mysterious creature in the lake. As described in my book *Monster of the Mere*:

"Now this is a disgusting generalisation, which if I were to use it in any other context would certainly be condemned as being sexist or racist or something or otherist but there are two types of male birdwatcher. There is the retired Colonel with bifocals, who looks at ornithology with a slightly liverish and patrician

attitude, and there are the geezers who look or at least behave like Bill Oddie. Pat Wisniewski is most definitely of the second persuasion, and anyone of a certain age who can remember watching The Goodies on Wednesday evenings during the 1970s will know exactly what I mean.

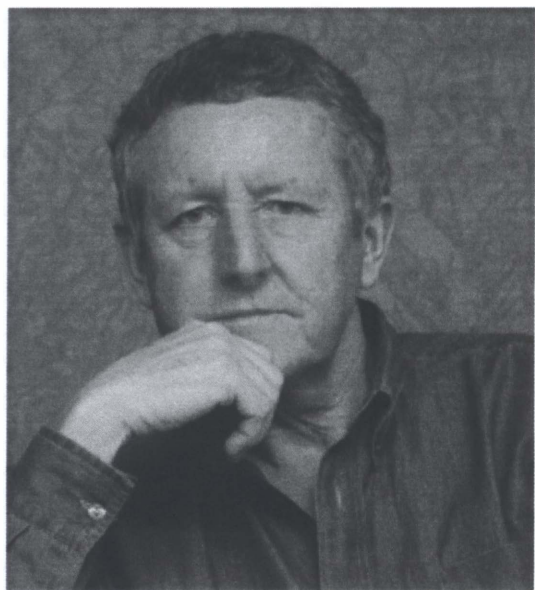
Within minutes of meeting Mr Wisniewski we realised that we had definitely fallen on our feet.

*During the course of our conversation over the next hour, which took place in his wood-panelled office which overlooked the vista of the nature reserve, it turned out that Pat was not only sympathetic to our cause, but that he was a devotee of the world of Bernard Heuvelmans - the 'Father of Cryptozoology' who died in 2001, and had been the honorary consulting editor of our journal *Animals & Men* for nearly seven years. He was also (like Richard and me), a keeper of exotic reptiles, and he even came from Richard's home-town of Nuneaton - a rather depressing little market town in the Midlands. By this time we were on Cloud 9. If Pat had told me that his favourite singer was Scott Walker and his favourite whisky was Jack Daniels it wouldn't have surprised me, we had so much in common. Could it get any better?"*

I think that there is a case for claiming that if it hadn't been for Pat, the CFZ as we know it today would quite simply not exist. Richard and I made the decision in early 2002 to change the CFZ from a fanzine publisher to a field research organisation, and furthermore we chose the Martin Mere expedition to break our investigatory duck. If it had not been for Pat, the expedition would never have happened, and we would not have received that boost of publicity and energy which led to the expeditions of the next six years, and our current programme of research and publishing.

So Pat mate. I will always be grateful to you, because I owe you a lot, but tonight I will go to bed a sadder man than usual, because in writing these words I am saying goodbye to a good friend, and furthermore a thoroughly decent human being. Pat leaves behind his lovely wife Louise, and an amazing legacy of conservation work and natural history research.

Goodbye old friend..Jon Downes



Lyall Watson (1939-2008)

Malcolm Lyall Watson was born in South Africa on the 12th April 1939. A genius scholar, he attended the University of Witwatersrand at the age of 15 and left at the age of 19 with degrees in Botany and Zoology. In the coming years he gained degrees in Geology, Chemistry, Marine Biology, Ecology and Anthropology before he moved from South Africa to London, England where he completed a doctorate in Ethology under the supervision of Desmond Morris, then director of London Zoo. Watson himself became director of Johannesburg Zoo at the age of 23. He also designed zoos, founded a national marine park in the Seychelles, and ran a safari company in Kenya.

Watson became famous in Britain as a presenter and producer of the popular BBC show *'Tomorrow's World'* and later, after becoming a cult hero in Japan, brought Sumo wrestling to a western audience on Channel 4.

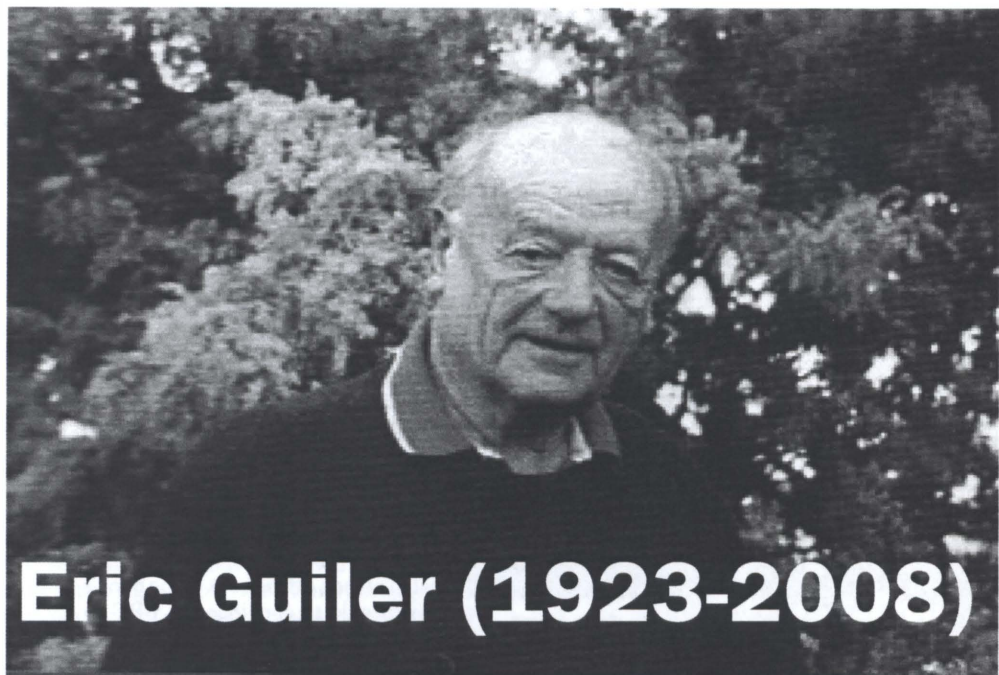
He is perhaps most widely known as an author of Fortean and popular scientific literature. His best-selling book, *Supernature*, sold hundreds of thousands of copies across the world and was translated into eight different languages. He coined the term 'the hundredth monkey effect' as a metaphor to explain how once the number of people or animals performing a certain action reached a certain tipping point, almost the entire remaining population would start to perform the action too. Sadly, blinkered sceptics, who were too dimwitted to understand that the hundredth monkey was intended as a metaphor rather than a hard and fast biological rule, sought to use their misunderstanding of the term as a tool to belittle the rest of Watson's work.

The success of *Supernature* opened many doors for Watson in his professional life and that of others; off the back of the book's success he was able to convince the BBC to fly Uri Geller to Britain to demonstrate his apparent psychokinetic powers - an action which launched Geller's career in the country.

Watson penned 25 books, mainly on biological and Fortean topics covering a vast array of diverse topics from 'the secret life of plants', which musician Stevie Wonder based an album on, to his last book in 2004 *'The Whole Hog'* a book about the history and biological potential of pigs.

Another of Watson's passions was travel and adventure. He visited Antarctica on 3 occasions as an expedition leader, led the first scientific journey up the Amazon River and was the first white man to be seen by the head hunters of Papua New Guinea. He loved visiting different countries to gain new experiences, and to meet new and interesting people. Watson was knighted in the Netherlands under the order of the Golden Arc in 1985 in recognition of his conservation work in the international whaling commission.

He died in Australia on the 25th June 2008.
Oll Lewis



Eric Guiler (1923-2008)

Known as Mr Thylacine, Eric Guiler was surely the best known of all researchers into the continued survival of the Tasmanian wolf. No discussion about this animal would be complete without mentioning Dr Guiler and his work. He was born in Ireland and moved to Tasmania in 1947 after serving with the British army in Tunisia in WWII. He worked at the University of Tasmania, gaining a Ph.D in marine biology. He became interested in marsupials at a time when most of them were still considered pests. The University now offers three wildlife scholarships in his honour. The scholarships are available to Honours students undertaking research related to the disease currently affecting the Tasmanian devil population and run up to \$7000.

His interest was piqued in 1957 when, as chairman of the Animals and Birds Protection Board, he went to Broadmarsh to investigate the killing of some sheep by an unknown predator. Tracks were found that were identified as thylacine prints. Several more expeditions followed between 1957 and 1966 producing more footprints and more reports of sightings from the local residents.

Over the years, Dr Guiler worked with other famous thylacine researchers, such as Col Bailey. He discovered droppings, hairs and prints on his many expeditions on

the track of the Tazzy wolf. His findings were donated to the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery.

Eric wrote two books on the animal: *The Tragedy of the Tasmanian Tiger* and *Tasmanian Tiger: A Lesson to Be Learnt*.

Sadly he never did get to see a live thylacine, despite all his efforts in the bush. For a while he began to think the animal was a lost cause and that, though it had survived at least into the 1950s, it was now extinct or headed for extinction.

He seems to have changed his mind again though, striking out into the bush at the age of 79 on the track of what many now call 'the healthiest 'extinct' animal you will ever meet'.

Dr Guiler was 85, and had been struggling with illness for six years after a stroke. He actually suffered the stroke whilst in the field hunting for thylacines and feared he would not make it back out of the wilderness. I think we can all be impressed by such determination. I can only hope that if I see 79, I will still be fit enough to go out hunting cryptids.

Richard Freeman



MYSTERY CATS DIARY

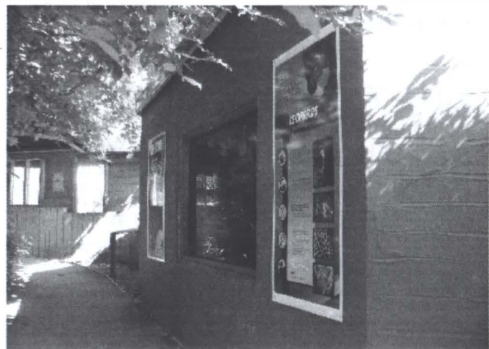
Corinna Downes



Exmoor Zoo is situated 12 miles north-east of Barnstaple, North Devon and nestles on the edge of the moor. The zoo cares for around 200 species of animals and birds, but one of the main attractions is Ebony. She is a four-year-old black leopard - one of only five left in captivity in Britain, and is also one of only two possible breeding-aged females left in the whole of the

British Isles.

The signs at the entrance to the zoo welcome you to the home of the 'Beast of Exmoor'. Of course she is not THE beast of Exmoor - reports are received from all over the country of big cats loose in our countryside, including leopards, pumas and lynx - but she is an example of the former species of big cat, and





was actually born in captivity at the Santago Rare Cat Trust in Hertfordshire to a Czech mum and an American dad.

When we visited the zoo we found Ebony lazing in the sun on a high perch in the branches of her enclosure seemingly oblivious to the many people who stood taking photos as they waited for the keeper to arrive with a morsel of food for her to eat whilst he gave an explanatory talk about her, and the myth behind the legend.

Ebony's enclosure is quite magnificent with high platforms for her to rest on, together with tall grass and shrubbery below for her to hide in. There are glass panels spaced around the sides for the public to be able to see her, plus a 'first floor' viewing platform.

Her enclosure took around two years to construct and she has happily settled into her new abode and eagerly awaits her afternoon feed which ties in with the daily (apart from Friday) 4.15 talk

about the beast of Exmoor legend.

It is hoped that a possible mate can be loaned from a zoo abroad in the near future, but before that happens various tests will have to be carried out to decide suitability.

Once these requirements have been decided upon and the paperwork sorted, and a male found, it is hoped that she will produce offspring that will act as her legacy for future generations.

Exmoor Zoological Park
South Stowford
Bratton Fleming
Near Barnstaple
North Devon
EX31 4SG

Tel: 01598 763352

Email: exmoorzoo@btconnect.com



There are several things to tell you about this issue, so rather than waffle on, I'll just get straight to the point.

First, CFZ-USA is very pleased to announce our latest U.S. representative: Brian Gaugler of New York. Brian will be covering his native New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut. He will be digging deep into old cases, new ones, undertaking research, and filing case reports for readers of the very magazine that you now hold in your hands.

Brian is also in the process of establishing the *North-East Cryptid Initiative*, an exciting project, the aim of which is to create a solid network of researchers who can share data, and stay informed of what is afoot in their respective areas.

Brian is particularly keen to hear from researchers in the North-East area of the United States, and encourages anyone who may be able to help to contact him at: brian.gaugler@yahoo.com

Second, the new issue of *Fate* magazine includes an article from me on mysteries of the London Underground. For years, rumours have been quietly told of encounters with strange beasts in the tunnels below Britain's capital - including

spectral man-beasts, big-cats and more. If you're interested in cryptozoological stories of the underground kind, check it out!

Third, a new interview with me has just been posted online to *The Daily Grail*. We discuss a lot of aspects of cryptozoology - the British bigfoot, black-dogs and more. Here's an extract from one of my replies:

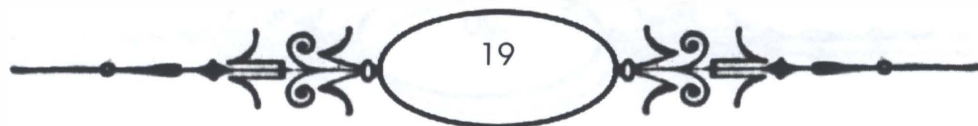
"I think it's fair to say that as time has gone on, my views on what some of these cryptids are have drastically changed. Like a lot of people, I got interested in all this when I was a kid: my parents took me to Loch Ness when I was 5, and I was hooked even then. And back then, for me, Bigfoot was a giant ape, and Nessie was a plesiosaur. It was all just black-and-white.

"But, today and for a long time now my views are very different. Although many cryptozoologists roll their eyes and frown whenever anyone dares to suggest that Bigfoot might be anything other than mere flesh-and-blood, there's no doubt in my mind that Bigfoot, the Yeti, the Loch Ness Monster, the Chupacabras, and many of these various 'things' are just too weird.

"They jam cameras, they vanish in the blink of any eye, we can never catch them, and sometimes they turn up in the same places as UFOs, or where other weird activity such as poltergeist activity and even the Men in Black is found.

"Now, I would say that at least some of these things are real, flesh-and-blood animals, such as Mokele-mbembe, Megalania, sea-serpents and such like. But Bigfoot, black dogs, many of the lake monsters, werewolves: these really are something from the outer edge, in my opinion."

But now to what is (for me, at least!) the best news of this whole month, and probably this year: the long-awaited publication of Jon's new book, *The Island of Paradise*.



As someone who is themselves an author, I am often asked to write reviews of other people's books. However, reviewing Jon's book which is an on-the-road, warts-and-all, study of a week-long expedition he and I undertook in 2004 in search of Puerto Rico's infamous chupacabras was somewhat of a departure for me; and I'll tell you why.

The vast majority of all the books I review are focused upon the adventures and exploits of other people. *Island of Paradise*, however, is very different; in the sense that it's a book in which I play a central role. Nevertheless, I hope this has not influenced my opinion of the book!

It was in the summer of 2004 that Jon and I headed off to the rain-forests of Puerto Rico, courtesy of the Sci-Fi Channel, who wanted to film us chasing the chupacabras for its now-defunct show *Proof Positive* which was a pretty well executed combination of *The X-Files* meets *CSI*, albeit in a non-fiction format.

For seven days we rampaged and roamed around the island in search of the vampire-like beast. And, thanks to Jon, the whole story of that distinctly bizarre week is now finally chronicled in print.

The best way I can describe *Island of Paradise* is as a Fortean version of Hunter S. Thompson's fabulous *The Rum Diary* that told of the master's own journalistic adventures on Puerto Rico back in the 1950s.

Jon skillfully captures the essence of what makes Puerto Rico so magical, in terms of its history, its culture, its people - and its overwhelming weirdness, too. Truly, as Jon demonstrates, Puerto Rico is a locale that attracts the adventurer and the thrill-seeker like no other. And given that it was a veritable hot-bed of activity of the vampiric and downright uncanny kind, what else could I, or indeed we, do but welcome the aforementioned weirdness with wide-open arms.

If Jon and I were going to spend a week hunting vampires and/or aliens courtesy of the Sci-Fi Channel, then, as he reveals, there was no better

place to do it than deep within the heart of the island of paradise, and while regularly fuelled by the finest of local cuisine and a plentiful supply of ever-present chilled margaritas and imported beer. Onward!

Having digested Jon's book, I can safely say that one thing stands out more than any other: only an adventure involving the Centre for Fortean Zoology could result in a deep discussion of Fireball XL5, Earl Grey tea, Guantanamo Bay, chupacabras DNA, Roswell, and the United States' ominous Department of Homeland Security!

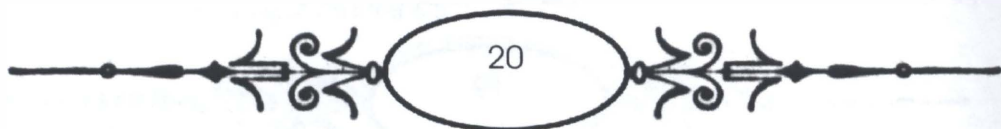
I was pleased to see that Jon included in the pages of his book a description of our time spent at our base of operations: the Wind Chimes hotel in downtown San Juan. For those who weren't there, it might seem superfluous; but for Jon and me it was a time to rekindle a friendship that had been separated by the Atlantic for a couple of years; and it was a time to make new friendships with the Sci-Fi Channel's crew.

There is something unique about the camaraderie that comes with hanging out alongside fellow thrill-seekers and adventurers all from different corners of the globe, most not even knowing each other, yet all thrust into a strange and surreal quest to seek out the truth about a diabolical beast said to roam a real-life paradise.

But, Jon demonstrates, it was without doubt the day we go our hands on a shining, silver jeep that things really took off...

There's something special about driving around in an open-top jeep in a place like Puerto Rico with one of your best friends, with the wind in your hair (for those who have hair...), And in hot pursuit of the unknown, while ear-splitting punk rock reverberates out of the CD player.

Barely one hour into our expedition, as Jon records, everything got a bit surreal. No expedition of this type would be complete without an excursion into the darkened depths of a shadowy old cave. That a bat decided to piss on



my head while we were in there only made things more memorable. With much humour, Jon records how I decided not to bother with rabies injections of a type that Ozzy Osbourne was forced to undergo after his own legendary encounter with a bat; and instead I hoped that the little pisser wasn't rabid, and that I wouldn't wake up the next day like one of the frenzied souls from *28 Days Later* or the spectacular 2004 remake of *Dawn of the Dead*. Needless to say, I didn't.

Of course, I knew that all of this would serve as good fodder for Jon's planned book on our trip around the island, and so I merely wiped my head with my bandanna, swore at the offending beast and his or her brethren and continued roaming and filming. And a crew of a dozen, led by the good Mr. Downes himself, laughed heartily!

Jon also has much to say about an alleged UFO crash deep in the El Yunque rain-forest of Puerto Rico back in 1957. Jon tells the reader of our fascinating encounter with a woman named Norka who was able to fill in some of the gaps suggesting that at least something had genuinely crashed on Puerto Rico back in the 1950s, and who was also a veritable fountain of knowledge on all-things monstrous too.

Granted, not everyone who reads this magazine is likely to be enthused by the things of a UFO-nature that used to make Fox Mulder foam at the mouth back in the 1990s; and if that's so, you'll be very pleased to know that Jon has a whole new perspective on Puerto Rico's "crashed UFO" controversy that has *nothing* to do with black-eyed, diminutive chaps from the other side of the galaxy.

And as long as I live, I will never forget that moment when Norka told us of her own personal encounter with the chupacabras late one night in 1975, and Jon and I turned to each other and realised that the beast Norka had seen was practically identical to the notorious Owlman of England a creature that Jon had hunted, and been haunted by, for years. It was truly a pivotal moment in that memorable week.

As we sat on the balcony of Norka's beautiful

home high in the hills of El Yunque, sipping cold drinks, listening to her stories, and with the sun bathing down on us, I knew that we were experiencing something very special; and that beneath its beautiful exterior, something or some things - dark, ominous, dangerous and bizarre dwelled on the island. And Jon's chapter on this particular encounter most certainly does not disappoint.

One of the things that stood out for me upon reading *Island of Paradise* was how the initial quest quickly became something very different and particularly so when new, and unforeseen, factors came into play. We had flown to Puerto Rico with the intention of trying to determine, for the benefit of the Sci-Fi Channel, if we could find, examine and identify any evidence for the existence of the chupacabras such as undeniable DNA. Yet, by the end of the week we were deeply immersed in stories of crashed UFOs, genetic mutation, bizarre changes in the island's ecology and much more.

I will never forget that week in the summer of 2004 when Jon and I roamed Puerto Rico's rain-forest, its lowlands and its little villages in search of monsters and mysterious beasts. It was an experience that will stay with me for all my life, and one that (as the book records) was as much about friendship, adventures and good times as it was about hunting for the chupacabras. And at the end of the day, that was good enough for me. As for Jon: well, *Island of Paradise* tells it all, just as it was the good, the bad and the plain strange.

If you're looking for the definitive book on the chupacabras, and what goes on behind the scenes of an on-site, week-long investigation in an exotic and mysterious world, then *Island of Paradise* is most definitely the one for you.

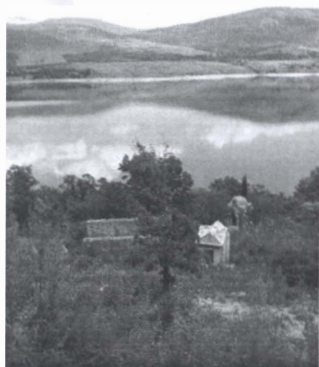
BUY IT NOW!

Nick Redfern can be contacted at his website: www.nickredfern.com

AQUATIC MONSTERS LOG BOOK

BY OLL LEWIS

SPOTTED DALMATIAN



A lake monster has recently appeared in Peruća Lake in Dalmatia, Croatia. One witness of the strange animal, Marija Duvnjak, said:

"Some people have tried to say it is some kind of huge snake but it's

not. It's a monster just like that. Its body is wide and fat and it has a head, which is the size of a man. When I saw it the first thing I thought was that we had our very own Loch Ness monster."

Other witnesses have claimed that the monster is over 6 metres (20 ft) in length.

Whatever the creature may be it is a newcomer to the lake because Peruća Lake was created by a large man-made dam in 1959. There is also no tradition of lake monster sightings in the area.

SUPER NESS

In recent issues readers of these pages will have read my protestations about many articles in the British papers claiming that "Nessie is dead!" because they haven't had a sighting reported to them for a while. The fact that it hardly stopped raining once last year in Britain, resulting in a much lower turn-out of casual monster spotters at the loch - and, therefore, less chance of anything being spotted in the loch - seemed to matter not to the papers.

In July, however, a videotape of a recent sighting



ANIMALS & MEN ISSUE 44

was released. The tape was made by 31-year-old David Garside and his father Graham Garside, while they holidayed at the loch in April.

The Garsides were taking a tour of the loch on one of the tourist boats when David spotted movement along the top of the water some way off. He grabbed his video camera so he could get a closer look using the zoom and started to film at the same time. When speaking of the sighting to his local paper he said: *"I couldn't really see what it was but I thought it looked sort of like a crocodiles back or something."* When he disembarked he told his father what he had seen, and his father jokingly urged him not to tell anyone lest he get locked-up.

Graham Garside said: *"It wasn't until a couple of weeks later when I was having a pint and he showed me it I could see it was real. I was a sceptic before, but I beleive it now. I told a few people, including the holiday company we went on holiday with, but some clerk I spoke to probably thought I was mad, so it didn't get any further."*

The video of the sighting is available to watch online at:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jiftu7TrUeM>

The video itself is 18 seconds long and shows what looks like a series of large waves. It is difficult to tell from the video if the waves are wakes or just waves but the video itself is fairly good quality for a Nessie video.

PEPIE PRIZE

Step right up folks and you too could win \$50,000! That's right, roll up for your chance to beat the credit crunch!

Every so often a businessman offers a reward to the general public in return for evidence of their local cryptid. The businessman gets a free plug for his company in the press, the newspapers get their chance to write about something more interesting than the local council planting a new tree or if it is featured on the TV news. Then the slightly camp weatherman gets to walk around in a pith-helmet with a comically oversized net trying his best to



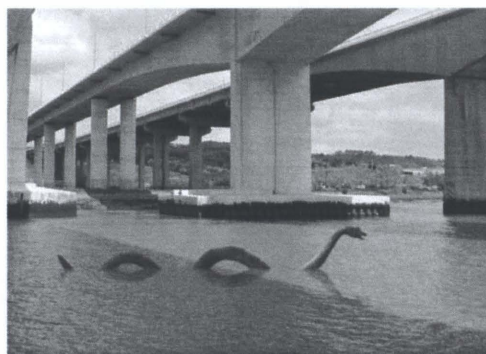
look rugged, everybody is happy.

The latest creature to have a bounty placed on its mug-shot is the monster of Lake Pepin, Minnesota, in the United States of America. The local businessman offering the reward this time is Larry Nielsen who operates a 125 passenger paddle steamer, *Pearl Of The Lake*, on the lake and runs the website *Pepie.net* where people can find more information on how to collect their \$50,000 reward.

Sadly the reward is only applicable if the creature turns out to be a new species so if you do go to the lake and find that the monster is an enormous example of an existing species of fish you'll not be able to claim the money.

FIND MEDDIE!

Numerous people reported seeing something unusual swimming against the tide in the River Medway as it passed through the town of Rochester in Kent, England.



Several people thought that it may have been a school of dolphins but one lady reported seeing a single 9m (30ft) long creature. She said the animal was grey to mottled brown and moved like an eel in the direction of the Amadeus nightclub. This picture, by the way, was a mock up by the paper's art department.

THIS SHARK, SWALLOW YOUR HOAX?

On the 9th of July fishermen in New South Wales, Australia claimed to have netted a great white shark (*Carcharodon carcharias*) in Tuggerah Lake. The lake is a large coastal lake linked to the Tasman Sea via a shallow channel known as the entrance.

The fishermen claimed that they dragged the sharks head out of the water and when comparing it to the size of their boat, 5.5m, they estimated the size of the shark to be around 7m (23ft). The terrified fisherman, who has fished the lake for over 20 years, cut his nets to release the shark which swam off after bumping the boat.

A shark's fin was seen breaking the surface of the lake in January 2006 and a 2m long baby great white shark was found tangled in nets in the area in September 2005. The local volunteer coast guard commander, Grahame Bissaker, was so concerned after the sighting he issued this statement to the press: *"Everyone needs to know there is a shark in Tuggerah Lakes and to stay out of the water. Even if you are in a canoe or kayak if the shark hit those, you'd be gone."*

However several experts are not as convinced as Bissaker that there is a 7m long great white shark in the lake, a shark expert from Taronga Zoo named John West believed it to be a hoax:

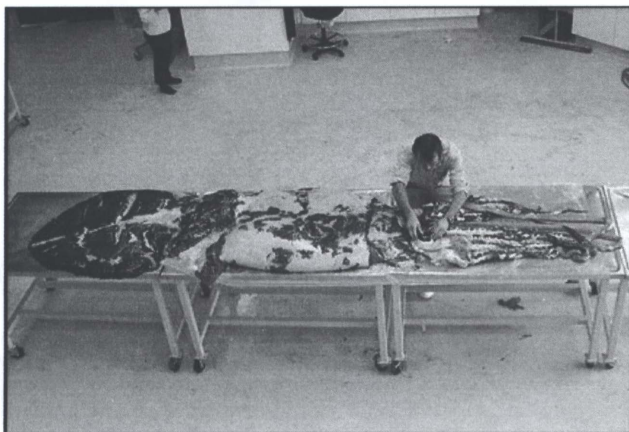
"I think it's a hoax - great white's don't go into estuarine or lake systems. In all my knowledge on shark biology and behaviour, that's unlikely."

"It wouldn't even fit in that lake, I don't know how deep the entrance is but you'd need several metres for a shark that big to get into it."



"A large shark like that would stick out like dog's balls." (This is an inelegant expression as Mrs. D so appositely pointed out at the Editorial Meeting, but it is a direct quote, so what could we do <snigger> but print it).

The local life saving club president, Mick Crowe, also shed doubt on the claims: "*The average depth of the lake is six or seven metres,*" he said. "*There's no chance a shark that big could get into the entrance, you could just about walk across the entrance channel.*"



West said that it may be possible for a baby shark to enter the lake but it would not stay in the lake long as it would be unlikely to tolerate the drop in salinity for very long. West believed that the sighting, if genuine, was much more likely to have been caused by a bull shark (*Carcharhinus leucas*) because they tolerate freshwater, and regularly swim up estuaries. Bull sharks only grow up to 3 metres however, so if the fisherman did catch a bull shark rather than a great white shark he may have overestimated the size somewhat in the heat of the moment.

SQUIDDLEY DIDDLEY

The colossal squid (*Mesonychoteuthis hamiltoni*) caught and frozen in February 2007 was autopsied in April at the Museum Of New Zealand, Wellington.

Scientists took over 48 hours to slowly thaw out the animal in a large saltwater bath. Thawing by microwave was rejected because of the possible

damage to the unique specimen and thawing at room temperature was rejected as the creature is so large the outside of the animal would have started to decompose before the inside had fully thawed. When the creature was first caught it measured 10m (32ft). However, by the time the creature was thawed, the creature had shrunk to 4.2 m in length, mostly due to the tentacles drying out slightly.

Based on measurements of the creature's beak scientists believe that this individual colossal squid is below average size; the beak is considerably smaller than other beaks retrieved from the stomachs of sperm whales. The creature has the largest eye ever seen by man and was measured to be 27cm wide in diameter (10.63 inches) during the autopsy. By the time it was measured the eye had dried out somewhat and it is thought that the eye measured up to 40cm (16 inches) in diameter during the squid's life.

The creature, originally thought to be male, was found to be female after scientists discovered ovaries during the dissection.



AT THE MOUNTAINS OF MYSTERY

I first heard of the Ukranian Grigory Panchenko in Dimitry Baynov's book *'In the Footstep's of the Russian Snowman'*. It detailed a close encounter he had had in a barn with the alması, a relic hominid said to inhabit much of central Asia and the former USSR. Some years later I read about his long term work in the Caucasus Mountains and the fact that there were many reports from the Kabardino-Balkaria part of the range. Panchenko believed that the population of alması were increasing in the area.

The alması, variously known as almas, albası, dev or gul, is said to be a man-like, hair-covered beast. It is smaller and more human in its appearance than the yeti or sasquatch. It is generally thought to be of the genus homo rather than a pongid.

I thought it might be a good idea to contact Grigory and to try to do a joint expedition with CFZ

members and his own team. Getting hold of a number and e-mail for him took sometime, and it was the best part of a year before I was able to contact him. Between us we arranged an expedition for June/ July of 2008. Grigory and his colleagues would be in the field for two weeks prior to the CFZ team arriving.

The British contingent, apart from myself, consisted of Dr Chris Clark (stalwart of most of the CFZ's previous foreign expeditions) Dave Archer (a CFZ member who has organized his own expeditions in the past) Adam Davis (an experienced traveller and cryptozoologist of Extreme Expeditions) and Keith Townley (a friend of Adam's who had accompanied him on some of his past adventures).

After a mind-bending ten hour wait at Moscow, we flew to Mineranye Vody where we were met

RICHARD FREEMAN



by Grigory, and Alexey Ahokhov - a very tall Russian computer expert and archeaologist. Alexey had a delightful dog called Humma, a cross between a red setter and a spaniel, and she accompanied us on all our Russian adventures.

After a night's stay in a spartan hotel in Tyranyauz, we drove up increasingly poor roads near crumbling cliffs and river banks to the area of our first investigation, White Rock. We were introduced to Anatoly, the final member of the team. He is a Ukrainian archeologist with a ginger beard, little English, a great sense of humour and an even greater love of vodka.

We made our camp in a small valley. When the road was first cut into this area of the Caucasus in 2000 the workmen sliced through many ancient tombs on the way. Around 1000 tombs were scattered around the area. Many, bisected by roads, now spill their contents to the floor. Dozens of human bones and skulls were just sticking out of

banks all around us. The remains were of Sarmatian people who originated in north Iran. The nobles were buried in cliff faces and slaves in the lower areas. The tombs dated from the 3rd to the 7th Century. The slaves' skulls had an odd domed appearance due to ritual binding. Grigory said that when he first saw one he thought it was an almasty skull, but soon realised that the bone was not thick enough.

In the two weeks before our arrival, however, Grigory had uncovered what seemed to be skull fragments of an inhuman thickness in a cave in the cliffs of White Rock. On examining these, I agreed that they did indeed seem too thick to be human. We bagged them up for analysis in the UK. We also took some of the Samation bones in case their DNA had any odd markers that might hint at hybridisation with relic hominids.

White Rock rose, cloud festooned and sheer



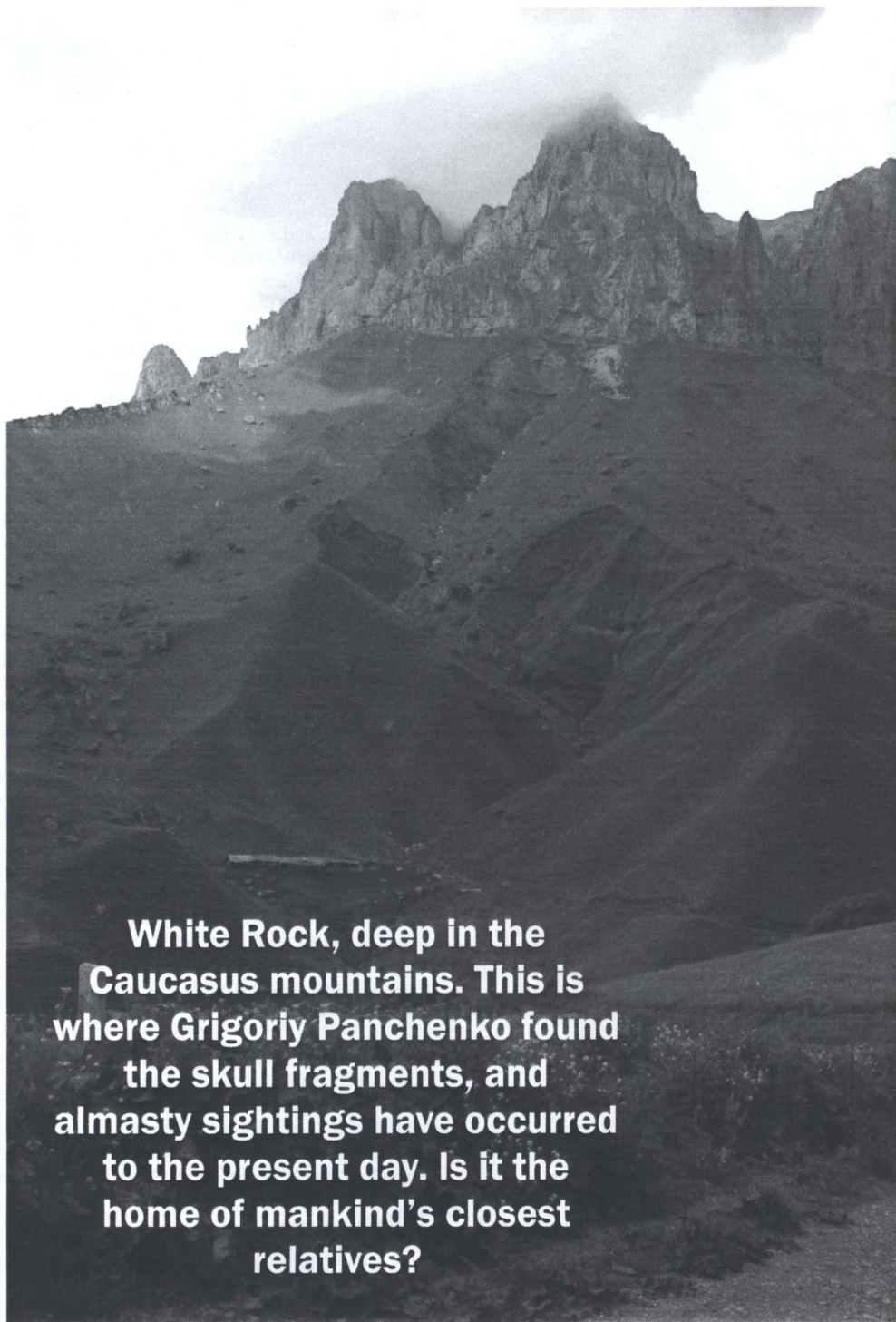
above our camp. Behind it was a range of ragged mountains called 'The Step Mother's Teeth'. The area was home to a she-bear and her two cubs, but we were not lucky enough to see them. Anatoly told us of his own encounter with an almasty in the 1980s. He was staking out an abandoned farmhouse near Nutrino. From a hiding place he saw a specimen pass by at only 4 meters away. It was less than 2 meters tall, but powerfully built. It had grey hair 'the colour of a poplar tree's bark'. Its head was domed with a sagittal crest and its nose was human-like but smaller. It had no chin, and a thick, short neck. It swung its long arms as it walked.

Anatoly had also seen one of the giant snakes which were our other objective, in a cave in the south of Kabardino-Balkaria near a town called Sammakovo. He was being lowered down into the cave when he saw a black snake he estimated to be 7 meters long, swimming away in the water that filled the cave. His father had also seen such a

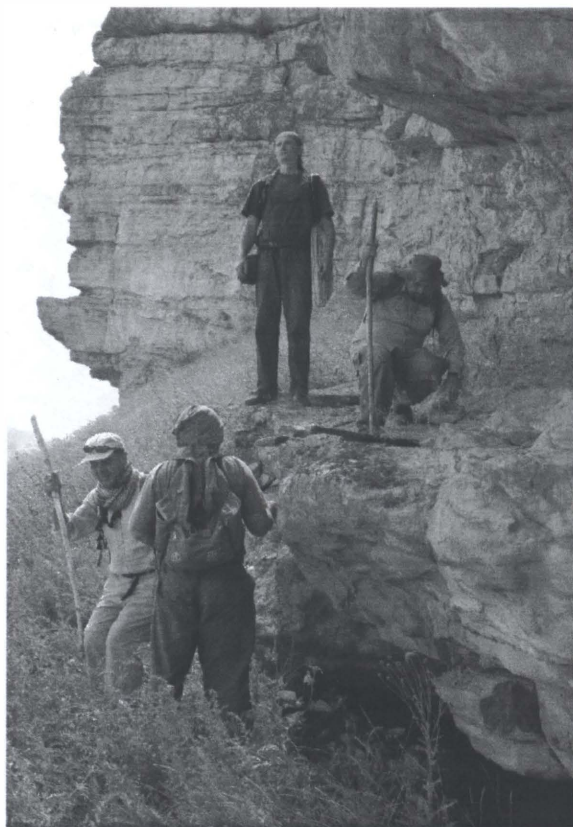
monster snake many years ago in Kazakhstan. Whilst in a marsh, he saw what at first he thought was a man. As he drew closer he thought the tall, dark object was part of a dead tree. Then he realised that it was a huge snake rearing up like a cobra.

The following day we set out to investigate the cave where Grigory had found the skull shards. Confronted with the massive climb, Keith decided to turn back to camp. The rest of us began on the long and winding path upwards. Eventually, we left the path and climbed the increasingly steep slopes. We paused occasionally to catch our breath, and eventually we reached the cliff face.

We walked along a narrow path to the cave where Grigory had found the skull fragments. An excavation of the cave revealed no further remains were to be found, so we spent the day



**White Rock, deep in the
Caucasus mountains. This is
where Grigoriy Panchenko found
the skull fragments, and
almasty sightings have occurred
to the present day. Is it the
home of mankind's closest
relatives?**



exploring more shallow caves, and then set up two camera traps.

The following day we climbed again (sans Keith) to retrieve the cameras. Plugging them into Alexey's laptop they showed only the setting and rising of the sun.

The next day we split up. Keith, Anatoly and I investigated a wooded area whilst Dave, Grigory and Adam went off to interview a man named Surgit who claimed to know the whereabouts of an almasty's body.

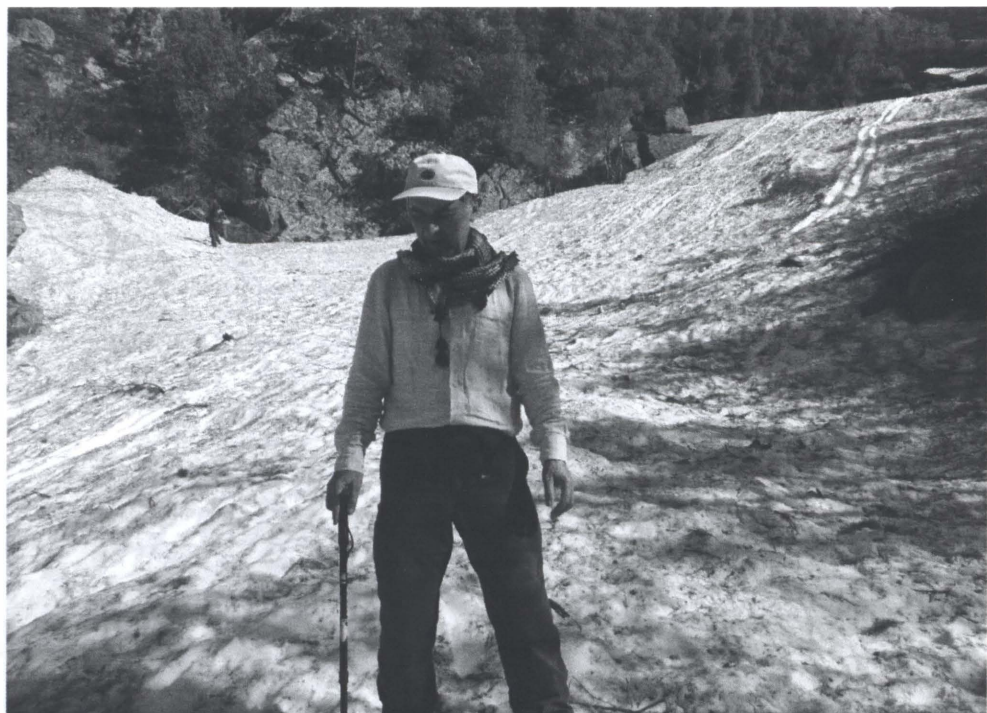
On the way to the forest we investigated some small caves. In one Anatoly had found eleven human skeletons dating back 3000 years, but no evidence of the almasty was found there. From a

distance it looked like the woods were surrounded by grass, in fact it was a carpet of six foot nettles. The going was steep and slippery. At one point Anatoly pointed out scratch marks on a tree. They looked to be made by nails rather than claws. Close by Anatoly found a hair in a tree - it was long, stiff and bi-coloured. At first I became excited, but then I found further clumps of hairs and they began to look suspiciously like the bristles of wild boar. I bagged them anyway just to be sure.

The other team, headed by Adam, who is a presenting officer for the Home Office, interviewed Surgit. Adam's job basically means cross-examining people who want to stay in the UK to see if they have any case. Hence, he is an expert at interviewing. Surgit claimed to have found the body of a female almasty in 1996. It had been crushed under a rockfall on a mountain known as Kashkatash. He had retrieved a tooth that he had given to a friend, and Surgit said he could lead us to the place in question. Adam seemed convinced he was telling the truth.

That night our camp was disturbed by the cries of a jackal. The next day we decamped and headed for the Elbrus area where the body was supposed to be. This was near the borders with Georgia so we had to get border passes. We stopped in a campsite for mountaineers that consisted of a number of alpine shacks of Moominesque cuteness. Surgit arrived and introduced himself. He looked a little like Father Ted. He, via Grigory's translation, explained that the area where he saw the body was only half an hour's walk up a nearby mountain. He was dressed in slip on shoes and a shirt. With only half an hour's walk, the body must have been in the foothills and easily accessible. We all set off immediately, apart from Keith who stayed in the wooden shack.

The going was a little steep but after half an hour on a decent path we reached an area of scree and snow that I assumed was where the body lay. To my surprise we passed this area and carried on climbing. We passed a huge boulder that had about a dozen or so plaques on it. They were



memorials to people who had died on Kashkatash! We had expected an easy 30 minute jaunt up a hill. Instead we were climbing to the top of a mountain that had killed a considerable number of people, whilst we were dressed in a fashion more in keeping with a walk in the park!

To one side of the mountain was a retreating glacier that had carved out treacherous cliffs. Masses of loose scree coated the sides of the mountain and great sheets of frozen snow, as slippery as a politician, stretched out over huge areas.

The path disintegrated and the way grew ever more treacherous and steep. In such situations a group should stick together, but that is exactly what didn't happen. Some forged on ahead whilst others lagged behind. We were led across a field of ice and snow that sat atop jagged boulders. Chris managed to walk across it, but I am twice his weight. My leg went through the ice and I lost

balance. In a flash I was sliding on my belly down the steep ice sheet towards spiky boulders 300 feet below. Realising that cryptozoologist puree was soon to be on the menu, I swung my body around, and jammed my boots on to the rocky outcrops at the side of the scree pile I had been walking on prior to venturing on to the ice. This stopped me after about 30 feet instead of the three hundred that would have ended in a sticky splat.

I crawled back on to the rocky area and decided that the ice was impassable for me. I stayed put whilst the others carried on to the area with the body. We had not started until 4 pm, and now the sun was getting dangerously low. Being stuck on the mountain after nightfall would be as dangerous as french kissing an industrial meat grinding machine, so I began to get concerned. The others returned after a cursory look at the place in question, and then we began our return journey.

On the way down we were split up again. Taking a wrong turn, I found myself walking along a wasp-waisted path next to 50 foot sheer cliffs constructed of a particularly loose and crumbly soil. At one point this gave way beneath me and I had to grab on to tree branches and hang, Indiana Jones style, over the cliff. I managed to pull myself back up and continued gingerly on my way. I was glad to finally get to the bottom, having nearly died twice in one day!

Back at the camp we had beers and sheesh-kebabs and talked about the need to stick together. The next day we returned to Mount Doom (except for Keith who had more sense) and climbed up a route that avoided the ice. Why Surgit had led us up the ice-festooned way the day before no one knew. This route took us higher and we climbed up through swathes of dwarf rhododendron.

At a height of nearly 10,000 feet I began to suffer from altitude sickness. On a steep area my vision failed like a camera iris closing. Blackouts at 10,000 feet are not good, so I decided to stay put. I sat down to try to get myself together as the others carried on higher. After about two hours Chris and Adam returned. The area was so steep and cramped that not everyone could walk on it safely. They left Dave there with the guides and Surgit, as he dug holes for a living. The three of us wearily returned to the camp.

Sometime later Dave and the others returned. Dave was holding a large dayglow orange body bag. He had found a high altitude cave with a nest made of rhododendrons inside. He had stuffed the nest into the bag and brought it down. Donning plastic gloves Adam, Chris and myself began a careful sifting of the vegetation. We found, and bagged, over 20 hairs with medullas as well as two pieces of dung.

The following day we headed for Elbrus village (except for Dave, who - like a glutton for punishment - had decided to go up the mountain for a third time). We were to interview an elderly man who told Grigory that he had seen an almasty in his youth. However, when we interviewed the man, who was 85, his story had changed. He said that it had been his *father* who had seen the almasty

at the age of 14. This would have put the event in the 1890s!

The old man recounted what his father had told him. It had been around noon and he had opened a door into a room in a part of the house where the ceiling had collapsed. He saw a young almasty sitting in a chair. It seemed to be basking in the rays of the sun that fell through the roof. It was covered with hair. The hair on the face was reddish. It had long, fine hair on it's head. The eyes were red but the old man thought his father had meant red veined rather than glowing red. The creature threw its head forward and the long hair fell in front of its face. The witness quickly shut the door and retreated.

The old man also said his father had seen a big snake near the house the man currently lives in. It was in 1964. His horse had reared up and he saw a grey / green snake 4 meters long and as thick as his arm, slithering away.

Later we talked a man of about thirty-years, named Tahir, who is the vice president of Elbrus National Park and a doctor of Geographical Science. He told us that three years ago, whilst hunting for some lost sheep, he had encountered a big almasty. He had been walking through a sparsely wooded area at twilight when he saw what he thought was a cow lying down. Then the 'cow' stood up revealing itself to be a tall, man-like figure. Thinking it was a human (the figure was in silhouette) he asked in Balkarian if he had seen any sheep pass by. When no answer was forthcoming he asked the same question in Russian. Still there was no answer. As he drew closer he saw that it possessed a high, dome-shaped skull. Then he realised that it was an almasty. He decided to fetch his uncle to show him the creature. Looking back he saw the almasty walking off into the hills. By the time he returned with his uncle it had gone.

Our next port of call was the small town of Nutrino. We had rented a small, spartan flat in a tower block - 8 adult men in a tiny flat was a squeeze. I have never been to anywhere as depressing as Nutrino. It is not mean or dangerous like Georgetown, or full of beggars like Banjul,

but it has an air of decay and hopelessness quite unlike anywhere else I have been to. The tower blocks are crumbling and peeling, and many stand empty. Some were never finished before the collapse of the Soviet Union brought economic degradation to the area. There is a 90% unemployment rate.

Adam and Dave went with Anatoly to stake out an abandoned farmhouse about a mile out of town. The house had a weird history. In the early 1970s it was supposedly the scene of a triple murder. An old man had some money put away, and had decided to spend it. Three of his relatives got wind of this and went round to his house to try to force him to hand over the cash. There was a struggle and the old man was killed. His wife stabbed the killer to death, but was then killed by the remaining two brigands. They ran into the mountains, but were later found by the police. The farm has stood empty ever since.

It was the building where Anatoly had his alomasty sighting back in the 1980s. In 2005 it was the scene of a very close alomasty encounter. Three shepherds had been using it to have a drink in, when the door to the verandah opened and a big male alomasty walked in. It picked the nearest shepherd up and gently put him to one side before leaping off the verandah.

Grigory, Chris, Keith and I went to investigate some caves where Grigory had uncovered some human-like bones but had left them *in situ*. The caves had filled with earth over the past few centuries and were now little more than crevices. Grigory crawled in with a trowel and started excavating. There were two collections of bones, but both were clearly human. One was an old woman with only one tooth left in her lower jaw. A coccyx and some ribs from this individual were also found. Grigory reckoned that they dated back about 200 years. Upper and lower leg bones from a man of an earlier age were also found. All were packaged up for testing in case they had any odd markers in their DNA that might suggest hybridisation with alomasty in past generations.

At the farm Anatoly said he had heard a male alomasty vocalising to attract a mate. Adam had heard some weird crashing noises but no one had

seen anything. The camera traps they had set up around the farm and its outbuildings revealed nothing but branches and grass moved by the wind.

Next day I resolved to join them on a second vigil at the farm. During the day Grigory, Chris, Dave and I set out to climb up a mountain called Gobisanty to investigate an avalanche. Avalanches kill mountain animals such as wild goat and yak that the alomasty will then feed on.

As we set out to the foothills, the air was split by a loud, inhuman sounding bellowing emanating from behind some bushes. Grigory immediately said that it was no animal he knew of. The harsh noise continued and got louder. Chris, Dave and I fanned out around the bushes in a pincer movement cameras at the ready. Could we have disturbed a sleeping alomasty? As we drew closer something loomed from the bushes. It was Alexey and Humma. He had taken a short cut ahead of us and had then hidden and made some spectacularly inhuman noises to scare us!

Grigory had warned us that we might have to cross some streams on the way up Gobisanti. These 'streams' were, in fact, increasingly dangerous rapids that we had to cross on foot. On either side we had to navigate endless legions of rocks and boulders. It was slow, tedious and exhausting. We finally reached the avalanche area. The snow had retreated and frozen, but hundreds of pulped trees lay strewn around like matchsticks. The only dead animal was a rancid cow too foul for an alomasty to eat.

After a quick lunch beneath the snowline we headed back down. The rapids were getting ever more fierce and crossing them became harder. One area was particularly savage. We got a large log and braced it over the rapids. They were not wide, but very fast. With Grigory holding one end, and Dave the other, I tried to haul myself across. Halfway, the pull of the cascading water sucked me down and my grip faltered. Grigory wrenched me out and on to the bank, saving me from being smashed into the rocks by the thundering cascade.

Next Chris tried his luck. He came even closer to



death than I had done, and was plucked out by Grigory. We finally staggered back to Nutrino damp and shaken.

That night Anatoly, Dave, Adam and I did a stake out at the abandoned farm. The building consisted of three rooms, two of which were locked. Around this, in an 'L' shape, ran a verandah with a door at one end. The main building was surrounded by other smaller outbuildings.

We set up camera traps in four different locations around the grounds of the farm. Anatoly brewed up red wine and honey in the hope the smell would attract the creature, and we also laid out bread and honey.

We all took up posts in various places on the verandah as night fell. The hours seemed to go quickly as I sat staring out into the darkness, listening for the slightest sound. Around 10.30 at night something made a bird-like twittering noise. Shortly afterwards one of the camera traps fired. The alomasty is said to make a twittering sound one of the specimens Grigory saw was making such a noise. Anatoly went out to investigate and did not return.

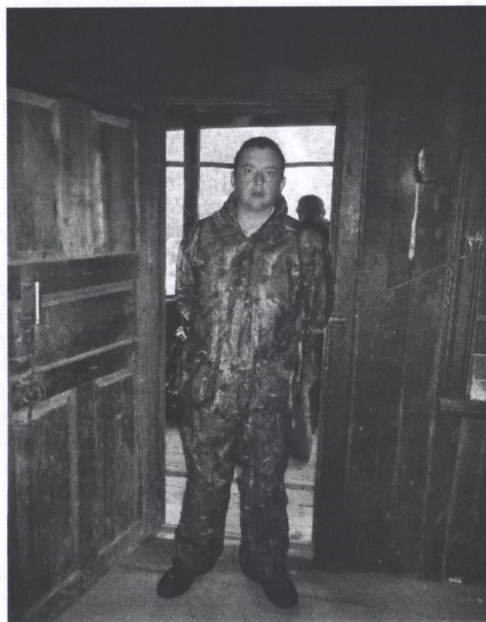
Dave fell asleep on one of the manky beds in the open room. Adam and I sat on the other one listening intently. A lull in activity was supposed to occur around midnight to 3 o'clock in the morning.

Hence Adam and I had entered the room to warm ourselves around an old stove. The 7 foot door of the room was open an inch or two and starlight from the clear night was pouring in. At around 2.30 in the morning Adam and I heard a guttural vocalisation. The nearest phonetically that I can write this is 'bub-ub-bub-bub'. Shortly after something passed by the door blocking out the light momentarily. Whatever it was was large enough to put the 7 foot door in shade and it seemed to be walking along the verandah.

"Did you see that?" I asked

"Something is on the verandah" said Adam.

Adam and I grabbed our digital cameras and rushed out to find only darkness and silence. We did a circuit of the building with our torches, but found nothing. Did an alomasty pass by us only 12 feet away on the verandah? I don't know. If it did, it



was as fast and silent as a cat. But something blocked out a slit of starlight 7 feet tall only seconds after the weird vocalisation.

At first light we looked for Anatoly. We found him asleep in one of the outbuildings. We took the camera traps back to the flat and downloaded the images on to Alexey's laptop. They showed sunrise, sunset and branches moved by wind.

The twelfth day was to be the last for Adam, Keith and Dave. Surgit phoned telling us that the friend he had given the almasty tooth to was a wise woman who was using it as a charm. She worked in a restaurant in a nearby village and he would take us to her. He duly arrived and we set off.

The wise woman was not the crone that the phrase 'wise woman' conjurs up, but a fairly normal looking middle-aged woman. We had a pleasant meal in the restaurant whilst Surgit spoke with her. Apparently she had given the tooth to her daughters in the city of Nalchik. They had mislaid it and were now tearing apart their flat in order to find it. I found it very odd that an object used as a 'charm' was being treated so off hand.

That night we all drank beer, wine and vodka to see the three lads off. Alexey drove the lads back to Mineranye Vody and picked up his girlfriend Natasha.

Next day there was still no sign of the elusive tooth. Chris, Grigory and I staked out the farm again, this time adding pungently smelling fried onion to the bait. Nothing happened, but I had recurring nightmares. Each time if fell asleep I dreamed that something with long, bluish fingers and dressed in a blue / black monk-like robe, was trying to strangle me. They were lucid dreams in which I struggled to wake up.

Back at the flat in the morning Surgit arrived and told a strange story. The spirit of the almasty had made the tooth vanish as well as the body on the mountain. However, he announced proudly, djinn (Islamic spirits) had given him a red hair from the queen of the almastys. He presented us with this item. It looked more like a vegetable fibre to me.

What were we to make of this wild tale? Grigory was rolling his eyes whilst translating. Surgit never once asked for money. He also trekked up the mountain again and again and worked hard looking for the supposed almasty corpse. The only conclusion we could come to was that he believed his own story and must have had some kind of mental problem. The promising lead of a corpse and a tooth vanished in a puff of smoke.

We phoned a man called Saeh Kumbunov whose number Surgit had given us. He said the man was with him when he found the body. The 70-year-old was much surprised at Surgit's claim and said there had never been a body in the first place.

Later that day, a gaggle of local women burst into the flat jabbering excitedly in Balkarian. It turned out that the person we were renting the flat from was not its owner. It looked as if we were going to be ejected on to the street! Grigory seemed to pacify them after a bit and they relented and let us stay. After they left, the electricity went out.

Alexey returned with Natasha, the editor of a furniture magazine. We departed for an area called Gushgit. We drove as far as we could then walked up a long, winding steep path into the hills. We made camp then went off to explore a kosh, or shepherd's house. The almasty is often said to lurk around these as some shepherds put out food for them. This one was a long abandoned and melodorous shanty that no self-respecting relic hominid would be seen dead in.

In the morning we set off to explore a series of shallow caves in the high mountains. We found some hair and a lot of dung. Grigory also unearthed what may have been finger bones, and we carefully bagged all the material. We came upon another abandoned kosh. This was in a worse state than the first, but it had an interesting Balkarian tribal symbol on the wall.

The following day I felt totally drained and had to turn back. I got to camp and collapsed into the tent. I made the right decision as a violent thunderstorm struck, and the others returned soon after, apart from Anatoly who had vanished once



again.

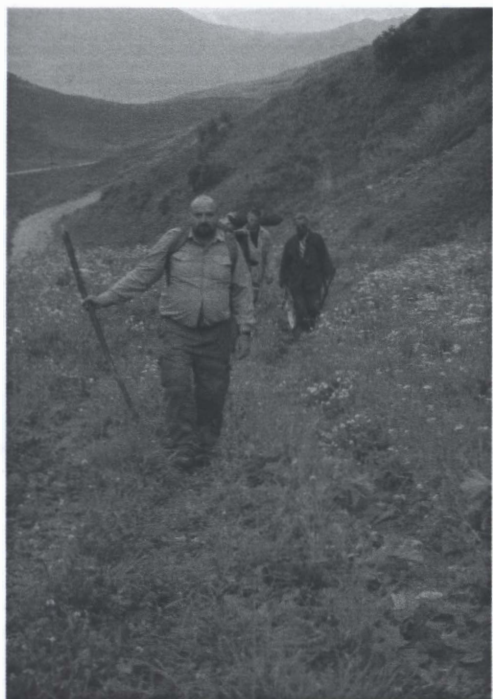
In the morning Anatoly returned - he had found a cheese factory deep in the mountains! There were guards with dogs and machine guns that were often fired randomly into the night. He thought that any almastys would have long left the area. We returned to Nutrino.

We visited Elbrus village again on the track of eyewitnesses. Grigory was hoping to track down the shepherd who had been lifted up by the almasty in the old farm in 2005. We found out that this man was away at a funeral and wake for several days but we did find some other witnesses who we interviewed.

One old man called Bahua Tilov had seen almastys on several occasions since the 1970s. The first time was whilst he was working in irrigation near Nutrino. He saw a large black almasty with two smaller grey coloured ones sitting amongst the

rocks. As he approached the trio of beasts retreated. Another time he was with two German tourists when they saw a large male almasty walking into an abandoned house. It turned and scowled at them. The Germans were too afraid to take pictures or follow it into the house. More recently he had seen a family group of them. He had tried speaking to them, but they fled back into the forest.

Rumagha Kulmesov and his wife were a delightful couple who invited us into their house and gave us tea, bread, cheese and delicious home made yoghurt. Rumagha had seen a juvenile almasty in his back yard only 2 years before. One night someone threw a pebble at his window. Thinking it was his son come to visit he called out telling him that the door was open. There was no answer, but sometime later someone knocked at the window. On investigation he saw what he at first thought was a sack of wool in the corner of the yard. Then he realised it was a young almasty.



crack, she could not see it's legs. The upper part was covered with hair. The hair hung down obscuring the face, chest and upper arms. The description put me in mind of 'Cousin It' from *The Addams Family*. It was slowly moving it's arms up and down in a manner of a child imitating a bird. It made a whistling noise like one, and from time to time it paused to pick up mud and sling it at the wall and shutters. It was still there when she left sometime later. She found it odd that such a 'crazy topic' could be of interest to us.

We had heard a recent story concerning a derelict restaurant. A scant few days before, a group of armed police were camping there, and when the night air was rent by inhuman screams they fled. We, armed only with cameras, decided to stay the night.

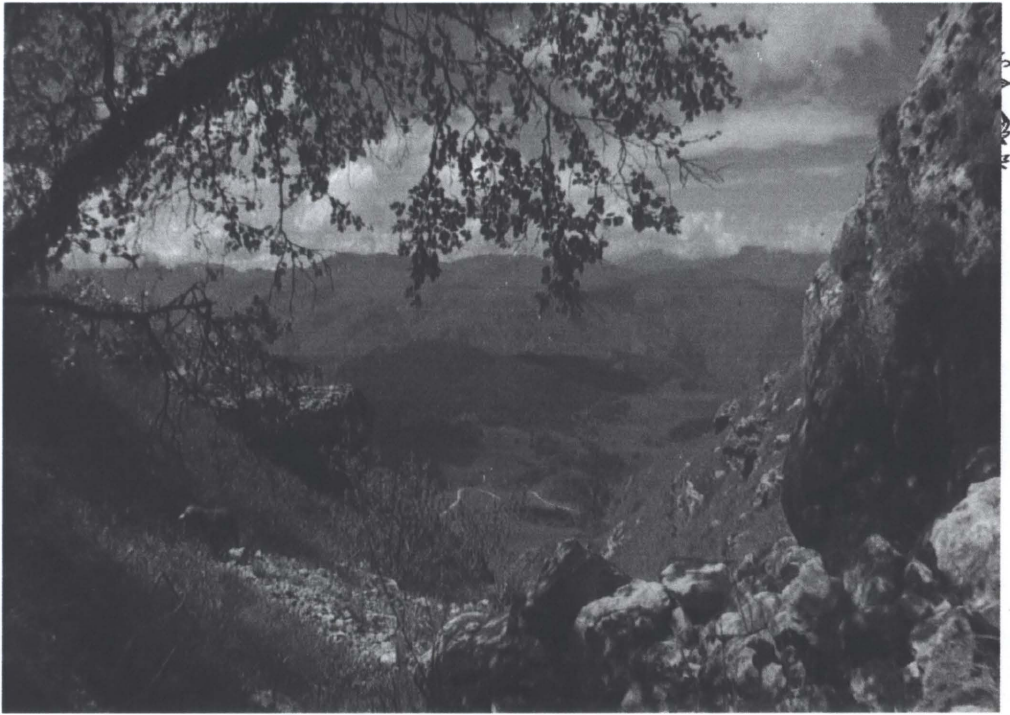
The restaurant had been built on the lines of a Balkarian castle. It had a 45 foot tower, battlements, circular gardens and many outbuildings. All were built from great blocks of stone. It fell into disuse in the 1980s, which was a shame because in its day it must have been spectacular. If someone had the time and money

He didn't get a good look at the face but he said it was hair-covered with pale, human-like hands. It made gestures as if it wanted food. Rumagha brought it some bread, which it took. It then made gestures that Rumagha interpreted as meaning that it had a friend who also wanted food. He brought a second piece of bread and left it in the yard. He saw the shadow of the first almasty leaving then he when back inside. In the morning the second piece of bread was gone.

Rumagha's wife saw an almasty in 1955 at the age of 14. She and her family had been deported to Kazakhstan. She had been invited to a relative's house. Upon getting there she found a number of children huddled in a corner crying. When she enquired as to what was the matter, one of them told her to peek out of the wooden shutters that covered the glassless window.

In the yard was a weird creature slightly taller than herself. From her vantage point, peeking through a





to do it up it could be a glorious attraction even today.

As it is, it is inhabited only by cows and bats. Most of the rooms were covered in cow dung and we had to search for a relatively clean area to sleep. As the sun set we set up cameras and a campfire. We put out bait and waited. It was a spooky venue worthy of Hammer Horror, *Dr Who*, or *Scooby Doo*.

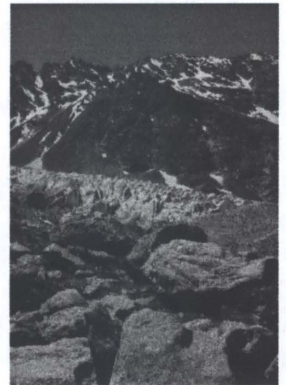
We took turns on watch, waiting for something to come lumbering out of the woods behind the buildings, or for a wild scream to pierce the darkness. Nothing came. The camera traps picked up only bats.

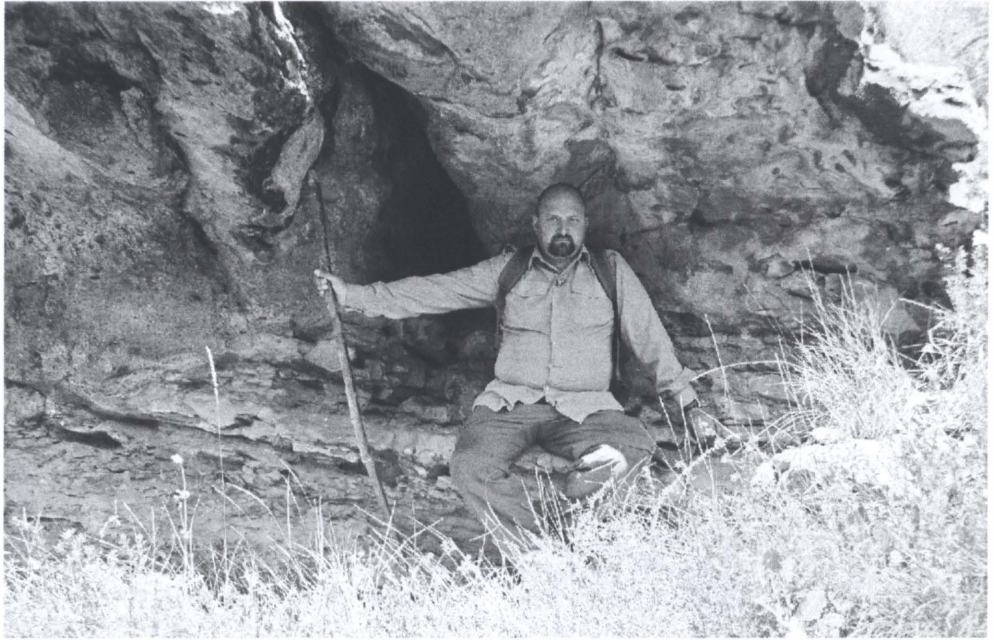
In the morning we met Alexey, Natasha, and Humma as they were going back to the Ukraine. Shortly after we journeyed back to Mineranye Vody. One the way we passed from the Balkarian area into the Karbadinian. The change was noticeable with less urban decay and filth. We passed through

an area called Bidick, rich in unexplored caves. Anatoly and Grigory are thinking of this area for a future expedition.

And so we returned to England with the samples. At the time of writing these are being collated prior to being sent of for DNA analysis.

So what is the almasty? I believe it exists, both Grigory and Anatoly have seen it. It seems smaller and more man-like than the classic yeti or sasquatch. Grigory thinks it may be a surviving strain of *Homo*





erectus. As far as I know, however, no fossil skulls of this species show the distinctive 'domed' shape.

The almasty could, of course be a descendent of *Homo erectus*. This species begat many others such as *Homo heidelbergensis*, *Homo floresiensis*, Neanderthals and modern man. Why could it not have another descendent - big, powerful and adapted for forest and mountain dwelling? The almasty seems very adaptable. Grigory says it can live where-ever its ecological twin, the brown bear, can.

On this expedition I felt closer to my quarry than on any other. It really felt that at any moment I could be staring into the eyes of man's closest relative. Kabardino-Balkaria is a unique place.

The almasty population is on the increase and it seems that they are willing to approach human habitation on occasion.

There seems a good chance of habituating one and getting conclusive evidence. What this will mean biologically, ethically and even theologically remains to be seen.

Different races of humans cannot seem to get along, yet alone a different *type* of man.

Grigory's project will continue as will his investigations in the mountains of mystery. I'm going to make sure that I'm part of it.



Fortean Frogs and Toads



This essay attempts to bring together cryptozoology, folklore and Forteana from ancient times to the present day relating to frogs and toads from the United Kingdom, Africa, and also China and the United States. Some of the information may be familiar to seasoned cryptozoologists and Forteans, whilst it is hoped that the obscure information will be of interest also. The stories are presented in chronological order (except for Charles Fort's discoveries.) Falls of frogs or toads are deliberately not mentioned here due to their widespread mention in the Fortean annals, except to say that not surprisingly, Fort mentions them. For example:

Scientific American, July 12, 1873: A shower of frogs which darkened the air and covered the ground for a long distance is the reported result of a recent rainstorm at Kansas, Mo.¹

Nine years later Fort recorded the following:

Storm at Dubuque, Iowa, June 16, 1882, in which fell hailstones and pieces of ice (Monthly Weather Review, June, 1882):

*The foreman of the Novelty Iron Works, of this city, states that in two large hailstones melted by him were found small living frogs...*²

Returning to information about frog mysteries found outside of Fort's immediate works, a report on *National Geographic's* web site from February 18th 2008 stated:

Giant "Frog From Hell" Fossil Found In Madagascar.

Scientists working in Madagascar have found what may be the largest frog that ever lived. The bad tempered Beelzebub or "devil frog" also poses a big mystery-Why do its closest relatives live half a world away in South America? ...Over the years a 75-piece puzzle emerged that was only recently put together by fossil-frog expert Susan Evans of University College London....Like its closest modern-day relatives-a group of big-mouthed frogs in South America called ceratophyrines-the devil frog also probably had a very aggressive temperament.³ Darren Naish has stated that the biggest frog of all time is the Goliath frog Conraua goliath.

(This last point about this frog's temperament is significant when we look at the case of an attack by a giant frog on an African native in the Belgian Congo in the 1940s, see below).

In medieval times, the Devon village of Bovey Tracey was subject to a manifestation of golden frogs. This has been thoroughly researched and published in *Animal's and Men* issue 1⁴ as has the modern phenomenon of odd (e.g. orange or pink, etc) coloured frogs,⁵ so the account here of the Bovey Tracey frogs will be brief. According to the records, during a thunderstorm a child fell dangerously ill in a household in Bovey Tracey. A woman arrived at the door, hoping for food and

RICHARD MUIRHEAD

ANIMALS & MEN ISSUE 44

hoping for food and shelter, which despite their poverty, the woodsman and his family were able to provide. In gratitude the woman blessed the ailing infant who was miraculously cured, and before vanishing (up a road called to this day Mary Street) she said that so that her benefactors would know this wasn't a dream not only would the child be forever cured but that the next day the family would discover a new spring full of crystal clear water and bright golden frogs.⁶

I have a report of a *bright red frog* from Essex in 1908:

An Essex reader asks if there is not a distinct kind of British frog of a bright reddish colour...The question has been raised before.....But they cannot change according to environments,as did one of these little red frogs, which was brought indoors and placed with the green tree frogs under a bell-glass as a "pretty contrast" In five minutes he was dark brown and almost invisible, as he squatted on the moist earth under the glass.'

A conversation with the academic and cryptozoologist Darren Naish in early July 2008 confirmed that there was nothing unusual about bright red frogs in Britain.*

Fifteen years later, in 1923, comes a rather more esoteric piece of folklore, this time relating to toads. According to the 1944 issue of *The Wiltshire Archaeological Magazine*:

Toads. A woman formerly of Compton Chamberlaine, who had been in service, when asked, in 1923, about toads, what did boys say about Baverstock, "I'll larn 'ee to be a toad" etc., answered " Yes, they blows themselves out and then if you throws 'em up in the air they bounces like a ball. That's the brown dark one, not the yellow frogs-hop frogs. And they spits fire

at 'ee: Oh yes, if you gets 'em up in a corner, they'll spit fire, sparks comes out of their mouths, like men's boots will strike sparks on the road by nights, you know; they makes sparks come out of their mouths. Oh yes, I've seed it.' This is truly amongst the strangest pieces of folklore I have come across in a while.

Returning to Africa, a report in *Copeia* in December 1945 described an attack by a giant frog on a native policeman near Tapili, Niangara in what was then the northeast Belgian Congo.* Mons. C. Caseleyr provided the following information: (my comment in brackets.)

In his hand (the policeman) carried a large frog that he had killed with a stick. The man stated that he had been walking past a small pool when something bit his leg. Though it was dark he could see to club the creature that had attacked him, and was surprised to find it was a large frog. This policeman was well acquainted with the local herpetofauna but never before had heard of anyone being attacked by a frog.....

On opening the frog's mouth Mons. Caseleyr found two teeth like the canines of a dog, but much smaller; in the upper jaw, two similar teeth in the lower jaw. The tongue " was forked like that of a snake." The frog was the usual gray-green color above, with a large orange patch on the chest and belly. The amphibian was very large, broad, and fat, and "seemed to be rather of the toad family, although I know nothing of these matters." ¹⁰

There is also a report of a giant frog being seen by a Cameroon fisherman, sometime before February 2006.*

* Now Democratic Republic of Congo.

ANIMALS & MEN ISSUE 44

The Loveland Frog, although so named is hardly a *bona-fide* frog.

The first claimed sighting was in May 1955. A businessman is said to have seen three or four 3-foot tall frog-faced creatures squatting under a bridge near Loveland. They were described as having wrinkles instead of hair on their heads, lopsided chests, and wide mouths without lips, like frogs. One of them is said to have held up a bar device that shed sparks. A strong odour of alfalfa and almonds was reportedly left behind. "

*"This creature is described as standing roughly 4 feet tall and having green leathery skin. It walks upright and has webbed hand and feet. The creature's head and face are like that of a frog."*¹²

In China, near Wuhan, Hubei Province during the summer of 1987 a group of scientists from Beijing University witnessed three huge toad-like creatures:

*"With grayish white skins, mouths that were six feet across, and eyes larger than rice bowls... This incident seems so utterly incredible that one would surely feel justified in dismissing it as a hoax, were it not for the fact the eyewitnesses in question were all trained scientists, including a major name in Chinese biological research, and all from the country's leading university."*¹³

There is an alleged cryptic frog in Papua New Guinea called the carn-pnay, which Dr Tyler, in the 1960s or 1970s, thought may have been the same as the Gimi River frog. The carn-pnay, or agak, is supposed to be bigger than the above mentioned

Goliath frog. On the authority of Naish, it is possible, though not entirely a serious chance, that the carn-pnay exists. Naish declares:

*It remains possible that a few big species [of frog] await recognition. In Throwim Way Leg (1998) Tim Flannery discusses a mid-sized, round-bodied New Guinea frog bristling with dark papillae, and if accurate then this description surely refers to an unknown species."*¹⁴

Naish also mentions on this same source, a frog from Cameroon with a glowing snout and a frog from Rwanda that is white.

In early, or mid 2008, an American cryptozoologist, Nick Sucik (who I am collaborating with on a book on snake lore due out in the autumn of 2009 to be titled *Serpent: a cryptozoology and folklore of snakes*) was visiting south-central Sudan in the vicinity of the town of Bor, which is in a marshy area by the Nile. Below are extracts from a communication with Chad Arment, another cryptozoologist, about a "massive frog" found in the vicinity of Bor:

*Most interesting though he** said back in 1998 a white woman working for one of the few NGOs operating in the country during the time (due to the war) once came into the village with a massive frog she was keeping in a box. He said it looked just like a normal frog but the size he gave with his hands made it bigger than a basketball.... Yesterday I saw that DJ again.... I asked him if he remembered what colors it was. Pinkish and mostly yellow."*¹⁵

Shortly after the Sichuan, China, earthquake of May 12th 2008 a photo appeared on the Chinese

*See Darren Naish : Tetrapod Zoology blog <http://darrennaish.blogspot.com/2006/01/graemes-pleistocene-megafrog.html> p.3

** I do not know who the "he" to whom Sucik refers is.

ANIMALS & MEN ISSUE 44

website <http://www.ifgogo.com/> showing dozens of frogs or toads crossing a road in the Sichuan area a few days before the quake.

Unfortunately I couldn't trace this photo when I searched through the website in early July 2008.

It is recognised that this essay only covers the tip of the iceberg as far as frog and toad cryptozoology is concerned. Hopefully it will inspire others to do similar research!

For lovers of toads, there is a monograph titled '*Toad in The The Hole: Source Material on the Entombed Toad Phenomenon*.'

This was *Fortean Times* Occasional Paper No.2 by Bob Skinner, publication date unknown but 38 pages of excellent Forteana of this now sadly defunct series. Occasional Paper 1 was '*Wildman China's Yeti*' by Steve Moore.

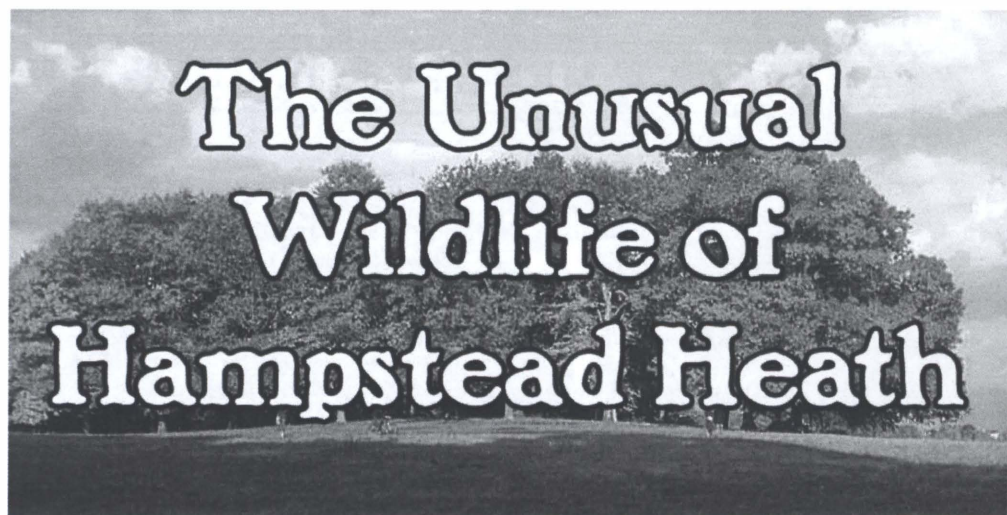
Correspondence with Richard Muirhead on this essay can be directed through:
richmuirhead@tiscali.co.uk

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Despite the hustle and bustle of London, the city can still boast more than ten-thousand acres of open space, and the ancient Hampstead Heath, just four miles from Trafalgar Square and the neon corridors of smog choked streets and Technicolor traffic, remains the capital's most leafy and tranquil of abodes. The Heath, managed by the City of London since 1989, excluding Kenwood, is a quilt of meadows, greenery, old trees, thick hedges, leafy shade, and glistening ponds, and in its grassy glory covers almost eight-hundred acres. Even though situated within the two boroughs of Camden and Barnet, it is a setting far removed from the concrete shadows which loom over the city, yet like the buzzing avenues and rising buildings, it also attracts millions of people each year and is known for its diverse wildlife, which includes a variety of birds, several species of bats, and the mysterious and brooding Liam Gallagher, often spotted taking a stroll on the rustic pathways, away from the rock 'n' roll lifestyle of the swingin' inner city.

The general public flock to the parkland to frolic, walk, exercise and relax, but over the decades there have been folktales of an obscure nature which have risen from the waterways, shadowy trees and hedgerows just like the highwayman of so long ago who used to pounce from the darkness and rob passers-by of their possessions. The legends that

pertain to the Heath prove that the wildlife, which exists now, is nothing at all out of the ordinary because what once lurked there before was far more peculiar, yet very real.

The land, once known as Hemstede, and recorded in the *Domesday Book* of 1086, has been a haven for mysterious wildlife. The area consists of twenty-five ponds - several are collected at Highgate - and also South End Green which resulted after the 1777 damming of Hampstead Brook which flowed into the River Fleet. It seems that the River Fleet has a lot to answer for with regards to strange animal sightings. In 1851 it was reported that a large colony of feral pigs inhabited the sewer system beneath the Heath. Now, I've heard of alligators in the sewers of New York, but pigs beneath London?! It seems that a once pregnant local sow became entrapped within the gloomy tunnels and raised her offspring on the fetid dregs that flowed through the underground network, with such creatures becoming at once very wild and aggressive as they matured below ground. Legend states that the happy litter of offal consuming offspring may have originated from pigs being kept in a nearby yard, but sceptics argued that such animals had never been heard grunting through the drainage grates. However, those who claimed to have seen such beasts believed that they had become trapped in the

Neil Arnold

ANIMALS & MEN — ISSUE 44

darkness due to the Fleet ditch, once encountered from the mouth of the sewer at the riverside. When the pigs attempted to swim to safety they would have been continuously flushed back to their vile crypt beneath the Heath. However, no monster, mutant pigs ever turned up so maybe the tale was nothing more than mere urban legend. If pigs could only fly, I hear you sigh!

The next tale of an out-of-place animal most certainly took place. In 1926, during a blazing summer, many people strolling in the vicinity of the Vale of Heath pond spoke of seeing a strange creature beneath the surface. Dog-walkers to the

area often reported their pets acting strangely as if some non-specific presence had spooked them, and it wasn't until the 25th August that the mystery was solved. A man angling hooked a very powerful creature that wrestled with his bait and when it raised its head from the depths, made a weird barking noise. The angler enlisted the help of another fishermen and they both patiently and carefully reeled in the mystery catch and were shocked to bring in a seal. The two anglers took the animal to the nearby Vale of Heath hotel where proprietor Mr Fred G. Gray housed the creature in a large tank. One of the local papers, *The Chronicle*, followed up the story, but a London



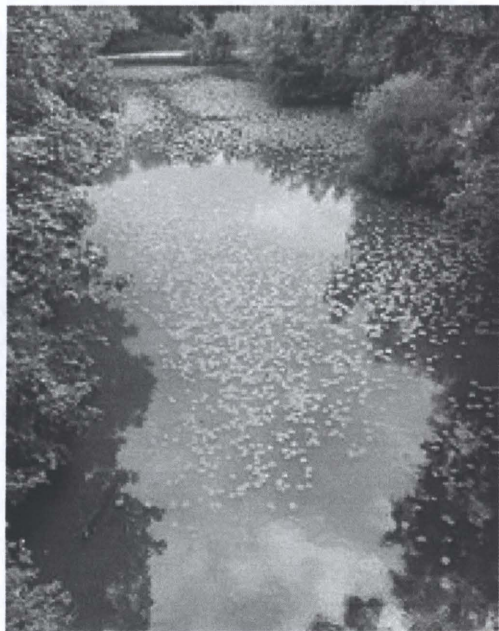
ANIMALS & MEN ISSUE 44

Zoo representative named Mr Shelley did not believe that the creature had originated from the pond and dismissed the story as a hoax, even though Mr Gray claimed he'd also seen seals lurking in the water. Gray stated at the time that the seals had travelled up the Thames and ended up in the tranquil pond by way of the River Fleet.

The fuss soon died down, but on November 2nd *The Chronicle* investigated the capture of another seal in the same pond. The previous day another angler claimed to have caught a huge creature which he commented, "...fought like a lion and barked like a dog", bending his rod one way, then another, and almost snapping his line. As he finally dragged the animal on the bank, the hook unfortunately ripped through its mouth and nose resulting in the poor animal dying minutes later. The angler took the seal home, stuffed it and exhibited it, whilst the original seal that had been caught in the August lived happily ever after, and had been named Happy. But with the seals being common knowledge in the parkland waterholes, zoologists still remained reluctant to believe they existed and it wasn't until sixty-six years later, on 7th April 1992 that the *Daily Telegraph* mentioned the sighting of an eight-foot long grey seal swimming in the Thames and watched by many from Westminster.

On May 4th 2007 *The Guardian* reported on the, '...horror in a half-shell', in reference to hundreds of terrapins, which had turned up at another Hampstead pool. The bird-sanctuary pond had been investigated by conservation rangers, who attempted to trap the creatures but the powerful claws of the red-eared terrapins had literally swiped through the wiry traps. The newspaper claimed that most of the twenty-five ponds had been inhabited by the terrapins with many even invading the male and female bathing pools, the creatures feeding off fish, frogspawn, dragonfly larvae, newts and even small birds. Mallards and

ducklings had been observed being dragged to the depths by unseen predators thought to be the animals now named 'terrorpins' and school children at Mill Hill in London were said to have been reduced to tears when they saw several ducklings eaten by the predators. However, at the time, terrapin experts from the British Chelonia Group were sceptical of the attacks but believed that maybe a snapping turtle had been dumped in the pond. The newspaper added, with views from a Julie Brownbridge, '...some carry salmonella, which is another sound reason to get them out.' While one park ranger is rather fond of the reptiles and hums the Syd Barrett song 'Terrapin' as he works, Brownbridge fears they are wreaking havoc with the Heath's fragile flora and fauna. Last year, they were seen scuttling between ponds



and, apparently, scaling a steep hill to reach a pool on the other side of the heath. One was found killed, its shell smashed by an angry angler (terrapins are very unpopular with fishermen).'

In South London during the 1970s it was reported that many ducks had been found dead on the banks of several park ponds. The cause of death was never found, but in November 2005 rumours spread like wildfire that an alligator was on the loose at Tooting Bec Common, in the south. No trace of the beast was found but in the same month a Nile monitor lizard was discovered at a Lambeth park. This is a creature which can reach up to six-feet in length and inhabits Africa, mainly the Sahara region, and two years previous in Croydon, a local council quashed rumours that a crocodile was inhabiting a pond in Shirley. It was claimed that hoaxers pretending to be Croydon council had put up a warning sign depicting a crocodile said to lurk in Millers Pond, but there was never any sign of the creature.

On August 9th 1994 *The Big Issue* magazine reported that a strain of dangerous crayfish, only found in America, had been discovered on Hampstead Heath. The crustaceans, known as Louisiana reds, being the size of small lobsters, were said to be inhabiting one of the male bathing pools and also carried a virus which could eventually extinguish the native crayfish. No-one knows how the crayfish ended up in the pool.

Two months later the Spider Recorder for the London Natural History Society, a Mr Milner, was strolling on the Heath one morning when he came across something startling. He told the *Evening Standard*, "*I noticed there was something different*

around here. I saw these webs." The webs belonged to a large colony, thought to be one-hundred strong, of tube-web spiders, relatives to the bird-eating tarantula, which, according to text books had become extinct over a century ago. Such spiders are recognisable by their forward-facing legs except the hind two, although such arachnids hunt at night, should one shine a torch at them, their green jaws will reflect eerily back.

Considering the vast pastures of the Heath, sightings of elusive exotic cats are few and far between, and yet sightings continue from the concrete jungles of similar cats. There are also various ghostly legends from the Heath, the most famous alleged spirit being of Dick Turpin, but the most intriguing tales are of the spectral creature kind, but spectral apes and evil vampires are for another time dear readers...

Hampstead Heath photos by plentyofants and markhillary courtesy of Flickr.com Creative Commons



CFZ NEWS

For several years we have been telling you how we have been in the process of building the CFZ Museum, and for several years before that we were telling you how we were *planning* to build the CFZ Museum. Now, at last, I am happy to be able to write that we have *built* the CFZ museum.

It is still a very rudimentary collection, but the main building (including a small reading room) and the aviary block have now been completed, and were first thrown open to the public at the end of June as part of the national Open Gardens scheme.

We have already moved some of the CFZ exhibits into the museum building, and have freed up the conservatory which has acted as a makeshift reptile room for the past three years. The conservatory is being redeveloped as a Tropical House cum fish room, but as we are all sick and tired of building work I am not even going to try and hazard a guess when work on this particular project will be completed.

As we rely on the North Devon freecycle programme to a great extent, work on the fish-room will not start until we have been donated four or five 4ft tanks, and at present the



ANIMALS & MEN ISSUE 44

conservatory is looking surprisingly bare and tidy, and only contains a large flight cage which is home to a Chinese crested mynah, a colony of caecilians, one of our amphiumas, a colony of weather loach and a couple of other tanks.

The museum, however, features two 6ft tanks, homing our alligator snapping, and Chinese softshelled turtles, four 4ft, and three 3ft tanks homing an assortment of reptiles and amphibians including Cuthbert, the unknown turtle species on loan to us from Portsmouth University.

We have a life-sized bigfoot model, a half-sized 'longneck' lake monster, a jackalope, the legendary 'Morgawr skull', and a whole slew of other odds and sods that we have collected over the years.

We would like to give special thanks to our old friend Noela Mackenzie, who has been a member of the CFZ since 1995, and probably, at 86, is our oldest member. She is now almost completely blind, and has donated us her entire library of books on a range of esoteric subjects, together with some handsome shelves to put them on.

Jonathan McGowan has promised us a display of Dorset big cat footprints, hair samples and freeze dried scat, and Graham and Janice Smith from *Metamorphosis* have also promised us some exciting exhibits, so by the time any of you visit us for the Weird Weekend, the museum will be something pretty special.

Thanks for your support over the years. We hope that you will think it was worth it.



weird weekend



Yes, ladies and gentlemen, it is that time of year again. Plans are already well underway for this year's event, which will - we can promise - be bigger and better than ever.

Once again, it will be held in the Community Centre at Woolfardisworthy, North Devon, and once again - for the third year running - the weekend ticket price is a mere twenty quid in advance. Tickets are already selling fast, so I would strongly urge you all to buy your tickets well in advance, and also to book up your accommodation as, if last year was anything to go by, there will be no B&Bs available for love or money within miles of the village, by the time the weekend comes around.

We can - as always - promise you a magickal weekend, with nearly 20 guest speakers and an array of other activities for people of all ages. Bring your kids this year! The Weird Weekend is 100% family friendly, and we have a special range of activities for the younger generation.

August 15-17

ANIMALS & MEN ISSUE 44

This timetable is ridiculously provisional, and that the CFZ take no responsibility for disappointment caused by the non-appearance of any of the advertised speakers

THURSDAY

7.00 p.m Cocktail party at the CFZ

FRIDAY

Open day at the CFZ 12-5.00 pm

Doors open at 6.00

7.00 – 7.15 Introduction
 7.15 – 8.00 MATTHEW WILLIAMS: *Crop Circles*
 8.00-8.30 BREAK
 8.30 - 9.00 POLLYANNA PICKERING: Yeti skull in Bhutan
 9.00 - 9.30 BREAK
 —the scary zone —
 9.30 - 10.15 MIKE HALLOWELL: *The Tyneside poltergeist*
 10.15 - 11.00 LEE WALKER: *New Ferry after dark*

SATURDAY

doors open at 10.00

11.30 – 11.45 JON DOWNES + RICHARD FREEMAN:
An introduction to cryptozoology
 (ALL AFTERNOON JOANNE CURTIS: monster making for kids)
 11.45 – 12.15 JON DOWNES: *The Owlman and Others*
 12.15 – 1.15 Dr MIKE DASH: *In Search of Dr MacRae* (Loch Ness)
 1.15 - 1.45 BREAK
 1.45 – 2.45 MATT SALUSBURY: *Water elephants of the Congo*
 (PAUL VELLA: Bigfoot for kids)
 2.45 - 3.15 BREAK (KIDS: Mad Hatter's Tea Party)
 3.15 – 3.30 QUIZ
 3.30 - 4.30 TIM MATTHEWS: *Weird stuff happens - my part in UFOlogy's downfall*
 4.30 – 5.00 RONAN COGHLAN: *The theology of extra-terrestrials*
 5.00 - 5.30 Break
 5.30 – 6.00 BOOK LAUNCH: 'Dr Shuker's Casebook' by Dr. Karl Shuker
 6.00 - 7.30 RICHARD FREEMAN ET AL: *Guyana 2007*

Expedition report

7.30 - 8.00 Break
 8.00 – 8.10 GRAHAM INGLIS: *CFZ Museum – annual report*
 8.10 - 8.20 PAUL VELLA - *the last 12 months in BHM*
 8.20 - 8.30 OLL LEWIS: *The last 12 months of lake and sea monster reports*
 8.30 – 8.45 CHRIS MOISER: *Confessions of a fortune zookeeper*
 8.45 – 9.00 CFZ AWARDS
 9.00 – 9.30 BREAK
 9.30 – 11.00 RICHARD FREEMAN ET AL: *Russia 2008 Expedition report*

SUNDAY

doors open 10.00

11.15 – 12.00 MICHAEL WOODLEY: *In the wake of Bernard Heuvelmans*
 12.00 - 1.00 Dr GAIL-NINA ANDERSON:
Fairies in art
 1.00 – 1.30 BREAK
 1.30 – 2.30 MIKE HALLOWELL: *Invizikids - Childhood imaginary friends*
 (KIDS: *Monsters are real* – Jon Downes/Richard Freeman 30 mins)
 (ALL AFTERNOON JOANNE CURTIS: monster making for kids)
 2.30 – 3.00 BREAK (KIDS: Treasure Hunt)
 3.00 – 4.00 GEOFF WARD:
Spirals - the Pattern of Existence
 (OLL LEWIS: Lake Monsters for kids)
 4.00 - 4.30 BREAK
 4.30 – 5.15 RONAN COGHLAN: *The Duncannon incident*
 5.15 – 5.45 JONATHAN DOWNES: Keynote Speech and Closing Remarks.

EVENING: Dinner at *The Farmer's Arms*

OTHER ATTRACTIONS

EXHIBITIONS

Exhibition: Nature art by Rebecca McGowan-Griffin
 Exhibition: Wildlife photography by Benjiman Leese
 Exhibition: Metamorphosis - exotic insects



Boom-Boom Mancini

Dear Jonathan

I just wanted to say again how inspired I was by your lecture at the Grant Museum. I am currently studying for a BSc in Biodiversity and Conservation (just finished my first year) but I'm not entirely sure as to the exact direction I want to go in life, you guys seem to have found it! (or at least have got pretty close). Maybe in the future, when I feel I've assimilated more knowledge, I think I'd like to volunteer for an expedition, at present I think I need to learn more before I could make a positive contribution.

Have you done much investigating into the possible re-appearance of the ivory billed woodpecker? I remember reading about it as a child (in a book called *Lost Wild America*) and was struck by the beauty of this bird, then 2/3 years ago I heard maybe it has been spotted ... wow! I was going to ask about this at the lecture or should I say, it occurred to me afterwards!

Anyway, the last letter I sent was just declaring my interest, I wanted to write something more personal this time. I find it enriching encountering others who have found their direction in life. Particularly if it's a direction I can relate to.

Continue living the dream,

All the best,

Tommy (Root)

PS Sorry for the many spelling mistakes! I enclose a poem I wrote, I think it's rather fun.

*"Wibble wobble" she said,
She said to the fat man's trout*

*"Don't wibble wobble me!"
Said the fat man's trout
"For I put a curse on thee: I turn you into a Bumble Bee"*

*"That's not very nice" she said:
She said as a Bumble Bee*

*"All I said was 'wibble wobble'
And you put a curse on me
I thought what I said was fun
I didn't think that I'd become
A busy buzzy buzzing thing*

Letters to the Editor

The Editor and his band of merry men welcome an exchange of correspondence on any subject of interest to readers of this magazine. We reserve the right to edit letters and would like to stress that opinions voiced are those of the individual correspondent rather than being necessarily those of the editorial team or the Centre for Fortean Zoology. Every attempt is made not to infringe anyone's moral rights or copyright, and we apologise if we have unwittingly done so.

I'll sleep when I'm Dead

Dear folks,

Here is a poem I wrote recently. It is called *Cryptid*

*On the precipitous
cliff edge of the highest shelf,
the dusty treasured book.
Hidden deep inside,
an obscure reference
to a skulking, carefree beast.
Undocumented,
overlooked by higher minds than mine.
Foolish though,
to scorn the neglected creature,
willing to roam the passages through my mind
and that eerie and
overgrown thicket on Exmoor.
I decide to investigate.
Glancing through dust on the page:
"Bat like wings, talons to avoid.
Hello, help, what's that noise?!"*

Richard Muirhead,
Macclesfield

With a honey desire to bring"

*"I'm sorry" said the fat man's trout,
"I'll turn you into something wondrous
Fun and funky with glee and joyous"*

*And with some magic words,
Magic words from the fat man's trout:
She turned into something wondrous indeed,
A beautiful lady trout.*

*And together they lived,
Forever and a day
With no-one ever daring to say:
"Wibble Wobble"*

Sentimental hygiene

Dear Jonathan,

I found the following reference to black dogs in an old Dutch Text. Attached the original scanned text and my translation. Enjoy!

By the way, I really love your books!

Kind regards,
Loes,
Holland

TRANSLATION from the somewhat abridged version above. I can't do much right to the very oldfashioned language, which makes it a pleasure to read it in Dutch but looses it's flavour in English. Nevertheless...

I made a slight abridgement of the original, just the end, which doesn't add anything, and one other descriptive passage. The original article is attached.

A French Batajon chased away by ghosts

Here's a strange happening, told by Doctor Parent, that took place in a regiment, where he served as a surgeon - major.

This regiment received order to set out from Palmi in Calabria towards Tropea. Having arrived at their destination, they were directed to a very bad barrack. It was an old, dilapidated abbey. The inhabitants of the village warned the officers that the bataljon would not be able to have a quiet night in this abode, for every night ghosts were haunting the place, because of which other regiments, that had been quartered there, couldn't stay.

(The soldiers) laughed about the superstition of these simple folks. But round and about midnight they heard terrible noises in all the corners of the barrack, as a result of which all soldiers, sleeping completely clothed, took flight in a hurry.

Een Fransch bataljon door geesten verjaagd.

Een heel zoo aandoening gebuurt, dat doctor Parent verhaalt, welke plaats groep is, het regiment, waaraan hij afbevoogd was.
Dit regiment ontving bevel, om van Palmi in Calabria te vertrekken en zich naar Tropea te begeven. Op de bestemde plaats aangekomen, woen men een heel slecht gebouw ontdekte. De inwoners waarschuwden de officieren, dat het bataljon den nacht te Pij verhoort niet rustig kon slapen, doordat er elke nacht geesten vrochten moesten andere regiments, die er reeds ingekwartierd waren, er niet konden blijven.

Men leide ons de liggende doelen der eenzaamheid. Maar ongeveer te middernacht hoorde men te gelijktijd alle hoeken der kamer verworvenlijke geluiden verschijnen, moesten de soldaten, die geheel gekleed slagen, vertrekken de plaats vanden. Dax hante officieren ontdekkende, antwoordde alse, dat zij de duren met een opening van de deur hante kamer hadden zien openen, van vertoonden, als men groten reukten deed met lampen open, verdween het licht, en de wanden van het vertrektoer aan bare was gekomen en daarna men te zegenwoordige tijde was verdween.

Men kon niet gaan slapen, want de soldaten kwamen, en in hante kamer terug te keeren. Zij brachten het over van de nacht aan den heren der die in de kerk bleef, welke het doel door den verjaagden ontvingen te laten de officieren.

de soldaten niet bewegen in hante kamer te slapen, dan op voorwaarde, dat zij er niet ben den nacht zouden overnachten. Doctor Parent en de overige officieren verbleefden zich over de verschijnselen en zij waren azaker van, dat het nachtelijk tooneel zich niet herhalen zou. Het gebouw bataljon sloep den sliep der onbedachtzame, tot tegen een uur te den morgen en en te die vertrekken, te zijde den ziele inachtelijke geesten zich herhaalden en allen de kameren verbleven om er niet meer terug te keeren.

Wij zijn geneesheer, aan de werkelijkeheid van het geest te slaan en men kan niet zeggen, dat het een droom of hallucinatie was, want het was geen aandoening geest, maar de bevoenen van Tropea de vreesing hebben geene in verachting, want de vreesing, die allen nacht plaats had en die reeds verheerlijkt regiments op eenzelfde wijze verloren had.

Voer het overige, weten men leide dat niet alleen in Napoli en in de jongste tijde, het bestaan van andere spookplaatsen is gevestigd, maar door de geleerde geschiedenis leere wordt alreus gesproken en wij stellen nog meer dan eenmaal gelegentheid hebben, hieraan nieuw voorbeelden te geven.

H. CARRER.

Mededeeling van twee in het jaar 1866
gepubliceerde artikelen door Mevr.
Adeline van Vay.

Op den 24 September 1836, kwam broef W. van het middelen van den veldtocht bij aan vrieden terug. Den eersten avond opkomende die geheel spontaan de geest van zijn vriend K. die door hem

Asked about it by their officers, they all answered, that they had seen the devil enter through an opening in the door to their room, in the shape of a big black dog with a long tail, that threw itself on them, went over them as quick as lightning, to disappear on the opposing side (of the room)

It was impossible to convince the soldiers to return to their barrack. The remainder of the night they stayed on the sea side or in different parts of the city. The next morning the officers could not get the soldiers to sleep in their quarters than on the condition, that they too would stay there.

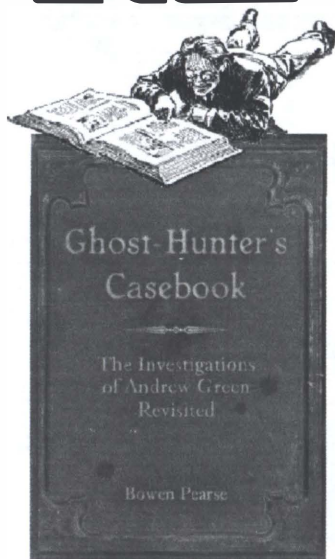
Doctor Parent and the other officers split up over several rooms and they were convinced that there would be no repetition of the nightly scene.

The whole bataljon slept the sleep of the innocent, until 1 o'clock in the morning, and now in all rooms at once, the same nightly noises repeated themselves, and everybody left the barrack never to return again.

We are bound to accept the reality of this fact, and we can't say it was a dream or a hallucination, because it was not a one of a kind happening, while the inhabitants of Tropea had taken the precaution to warn for the apparition, which appeared every night and which had chased away several regiments already.

From *Spiritualist Weekly*, November 23, 1889 (a weekly published by the 'Spiritualistische Vereeniging' te Middelburg, editor F.W.H van Straaten)

REVIEWS



The Ghost-hunter's Casebook
by Bowen Pearse

Paperback: 192 pages

Publisher: The History Press Ltd
(22 Feb 2008)

ISBN-10: 0752445006

ISBN-13: 978-0752445007

This is a particularly groundbreaking book, because of its concept if for no other reason.

Andrew Green was one of the seminal British fortune-tellers, and he is someone whose legacy has in many ways been unjustly ignored.

Andrew Green, who died in 2004, was for sixty years one of Britain's most active and best-known ghost-hunters. "The Daily Telegraph" famously christened him 'the Spectre Inspector'. The author of best-sellers such as *Our Haunted Kingdom* and *Ghost Hunting, a Practical Guide*, he investigated hundreds of reported hauntings during his career,

from famous cases such as 'the poltergeist girl of Battersea' to cases where a client had simply taken the wrong medication before bed.

His book *Our Haunted Kingdom* turned up in a rack of cheap paperbacks in the Woolserly village shop in 1974, from whence I bought it. It was a revelation, because it not only had enough ghostly tales to chill the blood of the 14 year old me, but it introduced me to the concept of the scientific study of paranormal occurrences. Because Green was not a devotee of the hocus pocus and mumbo jumbo school of ghost hunting, but instead suggested that such things could be explained within scientific terms of reference, merely invoking laws of science that we did not yet know.

In 1950 he formed the Ealing Society for Investigation of Psychic Phenomena (for which he carried out research projects on "child perception" and "telehypnosis"); and in 1952 he co-founded the Lewisham Psychic Research Society and the National Federation of Psychic Research Societies. He also wrote articles and, from the early 1970s, concentrated on investigating and writing about the paranormal full-time.

Green was often called upon as a consultant, investigating sightings in houses, pubs, theatres and even underground stations (Covent Garden: a tall man in a homburg, probably an actor who had been stabbed). He was called in to advise the American Disney Corporation on a new project.

But, despite years of searching, his only encounter was in 1950, with a phantom fox terrier that had died 12 years earlier in his uncle's house in Devon. After that, Green's experiences led him to the conclusion that ghosts are not souls of the dead but forms of electromagnetic energy, created by outbursts of emotion from living people.

ANIMALS & MEN — ISSUE 44

Green's interest in the supernatural began on a summer's day in 1944. As he explored the roof of a haunted house, a compulsion suddenly gripped him - 'Walk over the edge', it urged. Only his father's intervention saved him; he later discovered that several other visitors had not been as fortunate. This experience resulted in a life-long fascination with the paranormal, and the most important cases from his lifetime of research are collected together in this volume - alongside new research and many reports that have never previously been published. This is an essential guide to the career of Britain's most famous ghost-hunter, and indeed to the paranormal history of 'our haunted kingdom'.

The most important thing about this book, however, is that it is not just a retro puff piece. It is a fascinating re-examination not only of the man, but of his investigations. In many ways it follows the same path as Michael Woodley's *In the wake of Bernard Heuvelmans* which we published earlier in the year. Iconic figures need to be re-examined at regular intervals so that their iconic status can be justified. This book secures Green's status for many years to come. **JD**

Extraordinary Animals Revisited

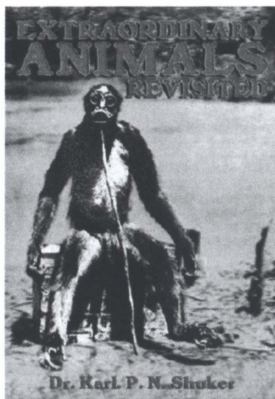
By Dr Karl P.N. Shuker

CFZ Press

ISBN 978-1905723-17-1

£14.99

The 19th Century were the glory days of zoology, and the biological sciences in general. Before the field became dominated by armchair zoologists and researchers with the moral courage of a titmouse, brave souls actually went to look for things and wrote about them afterwards. Unbridled by what their sneering peers or research grant boards might think, they trailed to the ends of the earth in the name of their field.



One of my greatest pleasures is haunting antiquarian bookshops in search of the writings of such men. In dusty old tomes with exquisite engravings, or tucked away in long forgotten journals, little gems of weird zoology can be found.

The dauntless Dr Shuker has recaptured these days with this excellent book. It has no formal structure, as do modern textbooks. It is, instead, a gazetteer of offbeat zoology.

Here the good Doctor returns to zoological mysteries often long forgotten and re-examines them. *Extraordinary Animals* is a bit of a departure from Karl's usual field of cryptozoology. Though some cryptids are included, such as the buru, the crowing crested cobra, and possible giant spiders, the bulk of the book deals with known animals displaying odd traits or behaviour and creatures that are just plain odd - period.

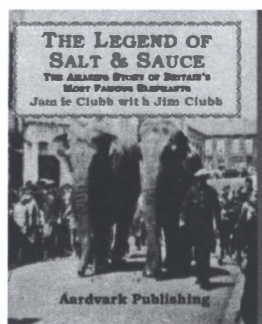
Herein you will find chapters on superstition linked with deathhead moths, aardvarks and peacocks. The forgotten art of drawing out venom from snake bites with the fabled 'snake stones' is covered, as are giant rodents both living and extinct. My personal favourite is 'Rhino Riddles' that includes blue rhinos, three horned rhinos, out of place rhinos, undiscovered rhinos, and the

ANIMALS & MEN ISSUE 44

possible late survival of prehistoric rhinos.

Beautifully illustrated with period etchings, engravings and woodcuts, nothing like *Extraordinary Animals* has been seen since the early 1900s (perhaps with the notable exception of David Attenborough's *Fabulous Animals* back in 1975).

This parade of zoological oddities is a must for every Fortean and antiquarian. A joy to read and a genuine breath of fresh air in a field now dominated by dry academia that sucks away that lifeblood of zoology, joy. **RF**



The Legend of Salt and Sauce: The Amazing Story of Britain's Most Famous Elephants

By Jamie Clubb and Jim Clubb

Paperback: 148 pages

Publisher: Aardvark Publishing

Language English

ISBN-10: 187290436X

ISBN-13: 978-1872904368

Salt and Sauce were two Asian elephants owned, for a while, by the elephant trainer George Lockheart. They had been wild caught in the 1890s and brought by the legendary animal dealer Carl Hagenbeck.

They were part of a group of performing elephants known as the 'Cruet', others being called Pepper, Mustard and Vinegar. What made Salt and Sauce so special is the conflicting stories about their nature and the long life they spent together in zoos and circuses under differing owners. Ultimately they caused the death of two of their owners.

Father and son team of Jamie and Jim are well known in the zoo and circus world as experienced keepers, trainers and zoo historians.

In this unique book they have tracked down old photographs and records of the animals throughout their lives. They also interview folk who had first hand knowledge of the animals.

Some recall the beasts as unpredictable and dangerous, other as placid and loveable. What was the real story of the elephants that were known to have killed two men? Were they panicked into such actions, were the animals genuinely aggressive, or was it a case of poor training?

As a zookeeper myself and one who has lost a friend through an elephant attack, this proved to be a highly interesting book. Not only for looking into the circumstances behind the two incidents, but for the long and engaging story of the career of the elephants who were still working in the 1950s.

All in all a remarkable book in the same vein as David Barnaby's *'The Elephant that Walked to Manchester'*. A must for all interested in zoo and circus history. **RF**

THE SYCOPHANT



Deep in a cave beneath Loch Ness lives a strange figure who steals ideas from other magazines and then somehow makes them his own.

Gabba gabba hey!

Redfern will be soooo proud of us! We have managed to get a legitimate *Ramones* reference into A&M.

When Richard unpacked all the cameras upon his return to the CFZ after the Russian trip, Graham hastened up to his lair with the trigger cameras. A few minutes later he came bounding downstairs



showing more excitement than anyone has known since *Space Ritual* first came out on CD. "*Look at this!*" He shouted. "*There is a picture of a hulking humanoid shape on one of the pictures*".

Indeed there was. But t'was no almaysty. It was the world's gothicist cryptoinvestigative dude setting up the trigger camera, and somehow coming out like Zippy the Pinhead.

Baby's on fire

Sit down my children, and listen to the story of the Cow eating the Fire.

Richard F: "Whilst we were in the depressing town of Neutrino, residing in what Keith described as a 'snide flat' Keith called me out on to the balcony and said:

'There's a cow here eating a fire!'

There was indeed, a cow eating a fire. And at one point it chased off another cow that seemed to want to eat the fire"

Hmmmmmm says 'The Sycophant'. Can such a thing be? Has the CFZ discovered an entire



However, we are so impressed that we have commissioned our new resident artist, the talented visionary Oll Lewis to - at great effort - produce an artistic reconstruction of the event. The picture on the left, by the way, is the block of flats outside which this iconic event took place, complete with cow.

Death holds no terror for Englishmen

**(unless they work for
Channel 4)**

breed of igneophagic ruminants, perhaps the origin of the legends of the fire-dwelling salamander? Ha! Of course they have, and the boy Freeman is so disgusted by this body blow to his own research on dragonkind that he is determined to suppress the evidence in order to make his own theory fit! Bloody hell, our boy is becoming a mainstream scientist.

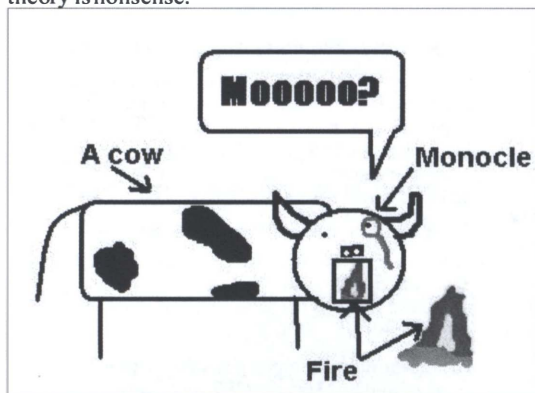
On the other hand, perhaps the cow (which apparently burnt its lips at one point, withdrew, and then came back to resume its feast) was merely eating tasty rubbish from the bonfire and the whole theory is nonsense.

The eagle-eyed amongst you will have noted that the latest expedition was partially funded by Channel 4 who planned to make a documentary about the trip.

Everything went well until the day before they embarked when it transpired that because of a Foreign Office warning that terrorist activity was on the increase in Kabardino-Balkaria, that somewhere along the line a decision was made that it would be too dangerous for them to go, so they pulled out.

We, of course, paid no attention and went on with our plans, carrying out a highly successful expedition, still funded partially by the accounts department of C4 who had to pay us because we had already signed the contract. This means that the only film of the expedition will be ours, and it is gonna be a cracker.

What happened to British TV journalism being the best and most intrepid in the world? Jade Goody. That's what!



ВОССТАНИЕ НЕПЧЕВ.

FROM RUSSIA WITH LOVE

"The CFZ rush
in where C4 fear
to tread"



The Island of PARADISE



JONATHAN DOWNES

Chupacabra, UFO crash retrievals, and accelerated
evolution on the island of Puerto Rico

In his first book of original research for four years, Jon Downes visits the Antillean island of Puerto Rico, to which he has led two expeditions - in 1998 and 2004. Together with noted researcher Nick Redfern he goes in search of the grotesque vampiric chupacabra, believing that it can - finally - be categorised within a zoological frame of reference rather than a purely paranormal one. Along the way he uncovers mystery after mystery, has a run in with terrorists, art historians, and even has his garden buzzed by a UFO. By turns both terrifying and funny, this remarkable book is a real tour de force by one of the world's foremost cryptozoological researchers.

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"...I'll sleep while I'm Dead"